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The Primacy of Resistance: Anarchism, Foucault, and the Art of Not Being Governed

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Abstract

Beginning with a critical inquiry into the reasons why the field of the political is traditionally elaborated in the archic nexus between government and state sovereignty, this study examines the possibilities of elaborating an alternative theory of the political in the intersections between Michel Foucault's theory of resistance and anarchist political theory. Taking Foucault's fifth thesis on power from *The History of Sexuality* as an alternative paradigm from which to reread the history of the political, the aim of this study is to demonstrate that the hallmark of Foucault's work emerges in the ways in which his analytic of power strategically shifts the site of politics away from its traditional locus in the exercise of government to the question of resistance. Under what I will elaborate in terms of the *primacy of resistance*, I argue that Foucault's studies of power and governmentality reveal an anarchist hypothesis of the political in the critical caesura between the political as archē and the political as agōn. Affirming a mutual alliance between anarchist theory and Foucault against the orthodox foundations of political philosophy not only exposes the conceptual principles that continue to sustain Western political practices, but also opens up the space to pursue the implications of a form of politics inseparable from the elaboration of permanent ethics of revolt, a distinct way of being in the world through resistance—that is, a specific art of not being governed. When the concepts of power and government are understood to emerge on condition of resistance, the political conceived as archē reveals its own contingency, and the question of politics is redirected from a constituent theory of an oikonomia to a destituent theory of resistance, a critical ethos of becoming ungovernable, not as a revolutionary overthrow of power, but as an art of not being governed. Rather than reducing Foucault to anarchism, however, it is my contention that the intersection between them emerges in the critical attempts to locate a form of politics which, in refusing to reconstitute itself as power, could never assume the form of an archē.

Keywords

Foucault, Michel; Anarchism; Anarchist Studies; Post-Anarchism; Resistance Studies; Post-Structuralism; Political Philosophy

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Introduction

Anarchism, Foucault, and the Question of Government

*The State is the external constitution of the social power...This external constitution of the collective power, to which the Greeks gave the name the archē, sovereignty, authority, government, rests then on this hypothesis: that a people, that the collective which we all call society, cannot govern itself...it must be represented by one or more individuals, who, by any title whatever, are regarded as custodians of the will of the people, and its agents...According to this hypothesis...is the explanation of the constitution of the State in all its varieties and form.*¹

--Pierre-Joseph Proudhon.

*It seems to me, in fact, that with the current economic crisis and the great oppositions and conflicts that are developing...one can see a developing crisis of government...This set of procedures, techniques, and methods that ensure the government of some by others appears to me to be in crisis now...People are more and more dissatisfied with the way in which they are governed: they have more and more problems with it and find it harder and harder to bear. I'm talking about a phenomenon that's expressed in forms of resistance, and at times rebellion, over questions of everyday life as well as great decisions...We are perhaps at the beginning of a great crisis of reevaluation of the problem of government.*²

*I would like to suggest another way to go further toward a new economy of power relations... one that implies more relations between theory and practice...It consists in taking forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point.*³

--Michel Foucault

According to the French anarchist philosopher Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, the history of political philosophy and practice finds its locution in a single hypothesis which, in presupposing what the Greeks referred to as *archē*, culminates in the paradigms of government and state sovereignty. For Proudhon, then, “[t]he form in which the earliest men thought of order within society was the patriarchal or hierarchical form, which is to say, in essence, authority and, in operation, government.”⁴ Presupposing the primacy of

¹ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, “Resistance to the Revolution,” in *Property is Theft: A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology* (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2011), 482.

² Michel Foucault, “Interview with Michel Foucault,” in *Power. Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1994), 295-296.

³ Michel Foucault, “Subject and Power,” in *Power. Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1994), 329; 336.

⁴ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, “The Authority Principle,” in *No Gods No Masters: An Anthology of Anarchism*, ed. Daniel Guérin (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2005), 81.

government as the principal way in which order might be conceived within society is what Proudhon refers to as the “authority principle,” or, “the governmental prejudice.”⁵ It is this principle of the *archē*, which as Proudhon correctly suggests both presupposes and privileges “government as the “*sin qua non* condition for order” in society—that has been absolutely foundational in the historical trajectory of Western political theory.⁶ Since its origins in Greek political thought, the terms of the political and the very possibility of politics have been haunted by this paradigm which, following Proudhon, might be termed *the crisis of the political, or that which assumes the primacy of archic government as the transcendental condition of possibility and material reality of politics*.

For Proudhon, within the history of political philosophy the “two notions—government and order—therefore, allegedly, have a cause and effect relationship with one another: government being the cause and order its effect.”⁷ Working within the paradigm of government, traditional conceptions of politics are, as anarchists often argue, reducible to theories pertaining to the exercise of power, thus neglecting the potential manifestation of alternative conceptions of both political theory and politics. Like the anarchist Lucy Parsons once maintained, “government in its last analysis is this power reduced to science.”⁸ It is in this regard that Mikhail Bakunin argues that the very term “politics,” as traditionally understood in political theory, is taken to refer to a certain simultaneity between authoritative power and government. Exploitation and government, Bakunin contends, “are the two indivisible terms of all that goes by the name of politics,” wherein the former represents “the pre-requisite as well as the object of all government, which, in turn, guarantees and legalizes the power to exploit.”⁹ For Bakunin, then, the indivisible nexus between the emergence of “politics” and the problem of government forms the primary conceptual impasse of political theory from its classical incarnation to its present form. Yet, according to Proudhon, the originary nexus between politics and government is itself subject to a fundamental hypothesis that has sutured the domain of

⁵ Ibid, 81.

⁶ Ibid, 87.

⁷ Ibid, 87.

⁸ Lucy Parsons, “The Principles of Anarchism,” in *Lucy Parsons: Freedom, Equality, Solidarity*, ed. Gale Ahrens (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing Company, 2003), 29.

⁹ Mikhail Bakunin, “God and the State,” in *No Gods No Masters: An Anthology of Anarchism*, ed. Daniel Guerin. (Edinburgh: AK Press, 2005), 151-152.

the political to the manifestation of government as such. Proudhon writes: the “external constitution of the collective power, to which the Greeks gave the name *archē*, sovereignty, authority, government rests on this hypothesis: that a people, that the collective being we call society cannot govern itself” (original emphasis).¹⁰ In Western political thought, the history of the concept of politics not only begins with the practice of government as its own transcendental condition of possibility, but also with an originary nexus that legislates a specific continuity between *archē* and *politeia*. Between the domain of the political and the paradigm of government lies the originary principle of the *archē*, and it is this principle that has hitherto fundamentally structured the dominant narrative of political theory and practice in the West.

With the paradigm of the *archē* acting as the theoretical and practical framework from which a critical conception of the political might begin, the very rationale that posits a fundamental nexus between the domain of the political and the manifestation of government has never been called into question, and political thought from its classical form through its present incarnation begins with the concept of government as its fundamental presupposition. As Proudhon’s dissent demonstrates, within the historical trajectory beginning with the seminal works of Plato and Aristotle, and stretching to modern political theorists such as Hobbes and Schmitt, the general terms of political theory arise by presupposing a synthesis between politics and the exercise of government which, in turn, is subject to the principle of an *archē*. It is this principle of the *archē* that at once designates the condition of possibility and teleological limit for thinking through what lies at the essence of the political. In classical political theory, beginning with the primacy of the *archē* has had the effect of both naturalizing the paradigm of government as the fundamental essence of politics, while simultaneously demonstrating that what causes the political to emerge as such is analogous to, and made possible by, power exercised as government. It is precisely this conceptual model of the political that, until recently, has remained unchallenged by the majority of philosophers, and has further prevented political theorists from conceptualizing an alternative theoretical and practical framework for the field of the political that could never assume the form of an *archē* as its privileged domain.

¹⁰ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, “Resistance to Revolution,” 482.

With such preliminary problematics in mind, this study takes as its critical turning point the inquiry into the reasons why the terms of the political in the West have assumed the form of government as the condition of possibility for a theoretical and material conceptualization of politics. Contributing to what has recently been referred to as the “anarchist turn”¹¹ in politics and political theory, as well as to the development of what I take to be an integral, yet historically neglected and critically undervalued concept found in the French philosopher Michel Foucault’s collected works, the aim of this study is to think through the philosophical and political problems underlying the historical terrain that reduces and structures politics to the spacing and act of government in light of what I posit as a key intersection between the resurgence of anarchist thought and practice and the key concept of *resistance* found in Foucault’s political thought and writings. Appropriating the concept of resistance as developed in anarchist political theory, as well as its further elaboration in Foucault’s thought, in terms of the critical locus from which to reread the history of the political against the primacy of government, it is my contention that what must be at stake in contemporary debates about political theory hinges on a unique relationship between Foucault’s philosophy of resistance and anarchism that creates a fundamental rupture in the political logic of an archē, or the specific rationale that presupposes the question of government as the implicit starting point for a critical conceptualization of the political as such. Taking seriously the potential of postanarchist philosopher Saul Newman’s claim that the goal of political theory is to “affirm anarchism’s place *as* the very horizon of radical politics” (original emphasis),¹² this project pursues the implications of the emerging body of anarchist praxis and scholarship along a trajectory following a core tenet of anarchist theory found in Foucault’s thought—what will be elaborated throughout this project as *the primacy of resistance*. Recognizing that resistance is primary with respect to power not only reveals an alternative critical methodology that shifts the site of politics away from its traditional archic locus in the exercise of power, but in doing so further illuminates the possibility of developing an anarchist theory of politics in its irreducibility to the principle of an archē.

¹¹ Simon Critchley, introduction to *The Anarchist Turn*, eds. Jacob Blumenfeld, Chiara Bottici and Simon Critchley (London: Pluto Press, 2013), 2.

¹² Saul Newman, *The Politics of Postanarchism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 2.

In contemporary political theory, the logic of the primacy of resistance has most recently been broached by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri in their text *Multitudes: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*.¹³ Inspired by a reading of the preface to the first volume of *Capital* in which Marx claims that labor both materially and politically precedes capitalist development, Hardt and Negri argue that such a theory corresponds with a critical methodology that begins with the question of resistance. Insofar as labor can be understood as holding a position of primary with respect to the development of capitalist domination, Hardt and Negri's point is to uphold that the "same is true of *resistance*" (original emphasis) since the former concept is traditionally appropriated as the substance that makes possible the dissolution of capital in the materiality of class struggle.¹⁴ Such a tradition of inverting the relation between capitalist development and labor toward the latter's capacity for resistance has a trajectory that stretches back toward the Italian movements of Operaismo in the 1960's and later Autonomia in the later 1970's, both of which Negri played a role as a key theorist. In these movements, Negri alongside Mario Tronti, Sergio Bologna, and others build upon Marx's claim that capital reacts to the active struggles of the working class, in order to suggest that class struggle is materially prior to socially developed capital. In other words, since work is the dynamic

¹³ See: Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Multitudes: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 64-69. Despite the direct correlations with Foucault, with their use of the term "the primacy of resistance" Hardt and Negri instead turn to Marx and derive the concept from a critical theory of labor. Indeed, as a concept inspired by a Marxist theory of labor, Hardt and Negri's use of the term suggests that labor is the primary force in capitalist society in which the former's capacity for resistance always precedes the latter's strategies of domination. The concept of the primacy of resistance, however, is not a key term developed throughout this text, and is instead invoked as a theoretical bridge toward developing a theory of resistance realized in what they refer to as the "democracy of the multitude" (67). It is in the context of this democratic multitude, and its universal struggle against "our permanent present war," that Hardt and Negri suggest that "the primacy of resistance allows us to see history from below and illuminates the alternatives that are possible today" (64). Nevertheless, while Hardt and Negri's attempt at a critical methodology that begins with the question of resistance is, in many ways, particularly keen, since they frame their understanding of the primacy of resistance in the dynamic between capital and labor, it is more adequately the question of labor rather than resistance that is given the status of primacy. Indeed, Hardt and Negri's work is less a theory of resistance than a theory of what they refer to as "immaterial labor" in which the production of immaterial products such as knowledge and ideas might come to be understood as a particular site of resistance (65). Emerging in the intersections between Foucault, anarchism, and political theory the notion of the primacy of resistance articulated in this study will be first distinguished from the universal characteristics Hardt and Negri prescribe for a politics of global revolt. Furthermore, rather than invoking the concept of resistance as a way rethink the question of labor in contemporary capitalist society, it is my contention that the question of resistance requires a serious inquiry of its own right.

¹⁴ Ibid, 64.

force of capitalist society, what is at stake for these theorists is that the concept of labor contains a certain capacity for resistance that always precedes capitalist domination.¹⁵ Such a conception of labor's inherent capacity to resist the strategies of capital ultimately invokes an alternative critical methodology that begins with the question of resistance rather than domination, and as such invites an affinity with an important aspect of Foucault's thought—that is, that resistance is primary with power.¹⁶

Although the logic of the primacy of resistance has briefly been discussed by Hardt and Negri in terms of a Marxist theory of labor and the coming politics of a global democracy, and while Mark Coté has established a specific continuity between the Autonomists and Foucault's theory of power in terms of reversing the traditional polarity between capitalist domination and class struggle, it is nevertheless a mistake to reduce the question of resistance to a theory of labor, especially in the context of Foucault's project. Rather than invoking the primacy of resistance as a concept that amends the traditional polarity between capitalist strategies of domination and labor, it is my contention that such a rationale as it arises from Foucault is best expressed in the context of anarchism

¹⁵ For example, see: Mario Tronti, "Lenin in England," Marxists.org, accessed November 4, 2016, <http://www.marxists.org/reference/subject/philosophy/works/it/tronti.html>. Originally published in January, 1964 in the first issue of *Classe Operaia*, in this text Tronti outlines the possibility of a critical Marxist methodology that inverts the traditional relation between capital and labor in such a way that class struggle becomes the operative force in the dynamic between the two. In a passage key to the theoretical development of Operaismo and Autonomia, Tronti maintains that traditional Marxists have: "worked with a concept that puts capitalist development first and workers second. This is a mistake. And now we have to turn the problem on its head, reverse the polarity, and start again from the beginning: and the beginning is the class struggle of the working class." Tronti's work has been of key interest to Hardt and Negri's work (see note 14 above) and Mark Coté (see note 16 below) and has influenced a restructuring of the dynamic between capitalist domination and class struggle.

¹⁶ The similarities between the Autonomist's reversal of traditional Marxist methodology and Foucault's analytic of power have not gone unnoticed. Indeed, in a particularly keen dissertation titled *The Italian Foucault: Communication, Networks, and the Dispositif* (PhD diss., Simon Fraser University, 2007), Mark Coté has outlined the ways in which Foucault's reconceptualization of power directly influenced several critical Italian theorists, including Tronti and Negri, to fundamentally rethink the history of capitalism in such a way that gives priority to the question of resistance. As Coté suggests, the Autonomist "reversal of Marxist orthodoxy was in profound affinity with Foucault's reconceptualization of power" in terms of how both valorize the question of resistance over strategies of domination within their respective critical methodologies (222). It is in the relay between the Autonomists and Foucault's analytic of power that Coté speaks of an "Italian Foucault" in which the key characteristic that defines such an intersection arises with the idea that "resistance comes first." (74) While Coté's work is particularly astute in highlighting the importance of the question of resistance in Foucault's work, his claim that Foucault's analytic of power expands Marxist critique as developed by the Autonomists tends to overemphasize the question of labor not only as the privileged site of labor, but also the central locus through which the question of resistance can be posed as such.

instead of Marxism. Staging an intersection between anarchism and Foucault's theory of resistance against the orthodox history of political theory not only seeks to expose the ontological and political principles that continue to sustain Western political practices but, more importantly, attempts to open a space for political praxis beyond the horizon of state-based politics. Situating Foucault's theory of resistance in the context of anarchism is not, however, a simple ideological preference, but rather, as we will see, that which arises from a close reading of Foucault's texts, lectures, and interviews from various periods of his work. Thus, instead of reducing anarchist thought to Foucault's philosophy, or Foucault to contemporary approaches to anarchism, this project reveals that Foucault's political philosophy and anarchist theory intersect by locating the question of resistance as the key concept through which the field of the political can be rethought as a permanent domain of agonistic struggle irreducible to, and in confrontation with, the state and power exercised as government.

In an interview from 1978, Foucault, like anarchist theorists before him, begins to situate his thought in relation to the "developing crisis of government," and further establishes the trajectory of his work "at the beginning of a great crisis of reevaluation of the problem of government."¹⁷ It is well known that during his lectures at the Collège de France, particularly in 1977 and 1978, Foucault begins to shift his emphasis from an analytics of power to an analytics of the forms of rationality intrinsic to Western practices of government, or what he refers to as "governmentality."¹⁸ With the turn toward the study of the history of governmentality Foucault indicates three primary shifts in the focus of his work at this time. First, rather than focusing on specialized practices of power and their deployment within specific institutional locations, as he did in *Madness and Civilization*, *The Birth of the Clinic*, and to a certain extent in *Discipline and Punish*,

¹⁷ Michel Foucault, "Interview with Michel Foucault," 296.

¹⁸ The lecture titled "Governmentality" was initially published in the Italian journal, *Aut-Aut*, and then reproduced twice, once in the journal, *Actes*, and again in the French collection *Dits et Ecrits*. The first English version, translated from the Italian by Rosi Braidotti, republished and revised by Colin Gordon in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, eds. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1991). The most recent version, included in *Security, Territory, Population*, is a revised version taken from a live recording as well as the original manuscripts from the lecture given at the Collège de France. Given that the majority of critical works on Foucault tend to cite from the first English translation, all further citations are from the edition published in *Power. Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1994), 202-222.

Foucault shifts his focus toward the analysis of specific complex forms of political rationality and techniques of power exercised as a government over an entire population, or what he theorizes as “biopolitics.”¹⁹ Second, Foucault analyzes government in terms of an ensemble of practices operating through specific forms of political rationality inherently different from the forms of logic intrinsic to political sovereignty and disciplinary power.²⁰ Indeed, following the lectures collected as *Security, Territory, Population*, many of the proceeding series of lectures given at the Collège de France are set to analyze the specific forms of rationality intrinsic to power exercised as government. Lastly, Foucault traces how the emergence of what he refers to as “pastoral power” during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries begins to combine with the logic of the state and “gradually becomes governmentalized.”²¹ In this regard, although traditional political theory often presupposes the state as the constituent component required for the emergence of the political, Foucault maintains to the contrary that the state can only be understood in terms of its essential relation to the question of government.

Yet, while the turn toward “governmentality” marks a critical turning point in Foucault’s thought, his work is not limited to the study and analysis of power exercised as government. Instead, this analysis of government directly corresponds with, for Foucault, a genealogical analytic of the counter-historical movements of resistance against governmentality. Indeed, the turn toward the study of government, especially as developed throughout several of his core writings, lectures, and interviews contains an often over looked conceptual hinge, a key turning point in Foucault’s thought, that fundamentally links the study of government to a critical theory of resistance. Thus, in a crucial passage from a lecture given in 1978 titled “What is Critique?” Foucault proposes a fundamental nexus between the history of government and the counter-historical movements of resistance as the domain proper to the political. Foucault writes:

¹⁹ Michel Foucault, “Governmentality,” 218.

²⁰ Ibid, 220. Here, Foucault describes the how the process of governmentalization occurring during the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries took place at the intersection between a “whole series of specific governmental apparatuses” and the “development of a whole complex of knowledges” 220.

²¹ Ibid, 220. Foucault’s point here is to draw an important connection between the problematic of government and the traditional conceptualization of the state in political theory. Rather than understanding the state in terms of sovereign power and juridical law, Foucault argues that the “state can only be understood in its survival and its limits on the basis of the general tactics of governmentality” 221.

[t]his governmentalization, which seems to me to be rather characteristic of these societies in Western Europe in the 16th century, cannot apparently be dissociated from the question “how not to be governed”...And if we accord this movement of governmentalization of both society and individuals the historic dimension and breadth which I believe it has had, it seems that...as both partner and adversary to the arts of governing, as an act of defiance...as a way of limiting these arts of governing...there would have been something born...both a political and moral attitude, a way of thinking...which I would very simply call the art of not being governed.²²

Here, Foucault points toward the way in which the historical question of government is simultaneously posed with the counter-historical problematic of revolt against these forms of governmentality. More fundamentally, however, it is my contention throughout this study that the way in which Foucault outlines a specific correspondence between power and resistance—that is between power exercised as government and the art of not being governed—reveals a radical new perspective from which to read the history of the political anarchically. This is why in the turn toward the study of governmentality Foucault continuously reiterates that the very questions of power and government necessarily coincide with another political question, a “phenomenon” which Foucault states is historically “expressed in forms of resistance.”²³ According to Foucault, it is through a critical theory of politics as resistance, and not of government alone, that one can begin to suggest an alternative “way to go further toward a new economy of power relations.”²⁴ Yet, in the search for an new analytic of power, it is not simply the analysis of government that designates Foucault’s principal concern at this period; instead, rather, Foucault clarifies that it is the concept of “resistance” which forms the primary “philosophical problem of our days.”²⁵ At its core, this study affirms the concept of resistance as the principal problematic explored by Foucault throughout the entirety of his work, while simultaneously suggesting that it is through Foucault’s theory of resistance

²² Michel Foucault, “What is Critique?,” in *The Politics of Truth*, ed. Sylvère Lotringer and Lysa Hochroth. (New York: Semiotext(e), 1997), 44-45.

²³ Michel Foucault, “Interview with Michel Foucault,” 296.

²⁴ Michel Foucault, “Subject and Power,” 329.

²⁵ Ibid, 336.

that the question of anarchism can be reopened within contemporary debates in political theory.

While the concept of resistance forms the critical axiom from which a new theory of the political might arise, an elaboration and study of the role of resistance, I claim, simultaneously acts as the theoretical and conceptual framework from which Foucault's political thought can be fully understood. Rather than presupposing the primacy of government and the manifestation of political power as the implicit starting point for a theory of the political, Foucault argues to the contrary that the very possibility of a new political economy of power relations "consists in taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point."²⁶ By beginning with the concept and practice of resistance as the very basis from which a new economy of power relations might arise, Foucault fundamentally reverses the orthodox logic of standard political theory, and radically denies the monopolization of the political by the paradigm of government. Yet, taking the concept of resistance as a beginning point from which to understand the history of politics, necessarily requires an alternative analytic framework from which to reread the history of the political as such. This means, however, that resistance is not only primary with respect to the history of the political, politics and relations of power, but also in terms of Foucault's methodology. In order to understand the very nature of politics one must begin, as Foucault suggests, by situating resistance in a relation of primacy with the history of governmentality. Between the crisis of government and the coinciding philosophical problem of resistance lies the great arc of Foucault's thought.

Furthermore, it is my contention in this study that between the paradigm of government and the corresponding critical theory of resistance, Foucault ultimately reveals a unique nexus through which his thought can be situated within the context of anarchist political theory. Although critics have and continue to argue that Foucault's development of what might be considered a political theory of resistance is practically "impossible and even conceptually incoherent,"²⁷ staging an intersection between

²⁶ Ibid, 329.

²⁷ See: Linda Alcoff, "Feminist Politics and Foucault: The Limits of a Collaboration," in *Crises in Continental Philosophy*, eds. Arleen B. Dallery and Charles E. Scott with P. Holley Roberts (New York: SUNY Press, 1992), 74.

anarchism and his thought through a rethinking of the idea of resistance invites a reconsideration of the political possibilities offered by Foucault's work, as well as a radically new way from which to read the history of the political that transcends the paradigm of government. In this regard, central to my argument in the chapters that follow is that Foucault's fifth thesis on power from the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*—which reads “[w]here there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this position is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power”—incorporates a radical political and ethical claim regarding the essence of politics which, in turn, forms an interesting affinity with anarchism that remains to be fully explored.²⁸ As I will argue throughout this project, what places Foucault's work in line with the history of anarchist thought is the way in which he situates *resistance as the being-political of politics*; rather than presupposing the paradigm of government as the principle of intelligibility of politics, Foucault argues to the contrary that the history of government is contemporaneously parallel with the counter-historical movements of resistance—that is, resistance is primary with the history of government, and as such acts as an alternative grid from which to reread the terms of the political. I therefore assert that the resurgence of anarchist thought and practice gives Foucault's political project a renewed sense of urgency, and further makes possible a redefinition of historical struggle irreducible to the history of governmentality.

Contrary to the practice of assimilating the political to the techniques of power, what is at stake for Foucault is that resistance must be understood and situated in a relation of primacy with respect to power. Under what I will elaborate throughout this project as the *primacy of resistance*, I argue that the political turns upon that which animates the counter-history of governmentality—that is, the question of resistance, or what Foucault refers to in 1978 as “the art of not being governed.”²⁹ If Foucault's fifth thesis can be understood, as one theorist suggests, in terms of the “*locus classicus* for assessing the possibility of a critical stance in his thought” (original emphasis),³⁰ it is my

²⁸ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality: An Introduction*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1990), 95.

²⁹ Michel Foucault, “What is Critique?”, 45.

³⁰ Kevin Thompson, “Forms of Resistance: Foucault on Tactical Reversal and Self-Formation,” *Continental Philosophy Review* 36, (2003): 113.

contention that his work intervenes in the history of political philosophy precisely by attempting to redefine the terms of the political not from the point of view of political power, but from the possibility of the counter-histories of resistance that run parallel, yet heterogeneous, to the historical possibility of power as such. In other words, Foucault reframes and redefines the field of the political from the point of view of resistance, and it is in this way that the general arc of his thought can be situated in relation to the history of anarchism. Staging an intersection between anarchism and Foucault's theory of resistance, I argue that a redefinition of the terms of the political beyond the principle of archic power is made possible through animating the practices that continuously ward off all acts of governance. This is to say that, if there is a potential for a form of politics and corresponding critical theory of the political beyond its culmination in the dual paradigms of power exercised as government and the logic of the state, it is to be found in the taking place of revolt, or the art of not be governed—a unique political rationality expressed in the intersection between the logic of the primacy of resistance and a corresponding forms of politics that animates the condition of possibility for life without government.

Throughout several of his works, Foucault gestures towards a fundamental rupture with the history of political thought which, not only acts as the beginning point for a new political philosophy against the history of political power, but also the general trajectory that forms an interesting link between Foucault's project and the history of anarchism with regard to the question of resistance. Rather than exclusively focusing on the question of governmentality as the primary site of political and philosophical problems, Foucault argues to the contrary that what is needed vitally "is a political philosophy that isn't erected around the problem of sovereignty."³¹ If, as Foucault was often apt to say, that we still need to "cut off the king's head" in political theory, I maintain that this regicide of political philosophy intersects with anarchist thought precisely by attempting to redefine the terms of the political not from the point of view of political power, but from the perspective of a counter-history of resistance parallel, yet heterogeneous, to the historical possibility of political power.³² As Foucault importantly

³¹ Michel Foucault, "Truth and Power," in *Power. Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1994,) 122.

³² Ibid, 122.

reminds us, what must be at stake in political thought is not simply the analytics of power and the study of governmentality, but that “which allows us to constitute a historical knowledge of struggles, and to make use of this knowledge in contemporary tactics.”³³ To be sure, Foucault’s genealogical—or as we will see, “anarchaeological”—method is itself a testament of the primacy of resistance.³⁴ Rather than beginning with the question of power, Foucault instead begins anarchically—that is, with a “meticulous rediscovery of struggles, and the raw memory of fights”—a “memory” of a form of politics expressed as resistance which, as Foucault reminds his audience, has traditionally been “confined to the margins” of theoretical and political thought.³⁵ (C-SMD 8).

In his emphasis on historical struggle, Foucault’s work is set to both revive and actualize the counter-history of sovereign power and biopolitical governmentality, and in this way marks not only an important turn in contemporary theory but, also, and even more fundamentally, a critical renewal of one of the central tenets of anarchist theory and practice—that is, a form of politics expressed as resistance to governmentality. Thus, in staging an intersection between anarchist thought and Foucault, what is at stake in this study is that this critical alliance can be made by reintroducing the concept of resistance as the vital and permanent component that reveals the field of the political in its agonistic specificity. Contrary to the practice of assimilating the political to the operability of power, what Foucault refers to as the political turns on that which animates the counter-history of political power—that is, a politics as resistance, a certain “art of not being governed.” Yet, and consequently, this means for Foucault that resistance is primary not only with power, but with the terms of the political as well. In other words, a critical theory of the political necessitates, per Foucault, a theory of resistance as its elemental component. *In this way, it is my contention that to understand the possibility Foucault posits of a political theory irreducible to sovereignty, the question of resistance—what I will elaborate throughout this project as the primacy of resistance in relation to the paradigm of government—must not be subordinated to the study of the history of political*

³³ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended. Lectures at the Collège de France 1975-1976*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 8.

³⁴ Michel Foucault, *On the Government of the Living. Lectures at the Collège de France 1979-1980*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2014), 77-79.

³⁵ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 8.

*sovereignty or to the study of the biopolitical governmentality. Instead, the primacy of resistance responds to the crisis of governmentality in a way that is itself fundamental; Foucault's historical ontologies of power, politics, and governmentality derive their incredible force from the affirmation of a counter-historical ontology of resistance that is heterogeneous to, yet cotemporaneous with, the history of political power. It is only through a critical investigation of the primacy of resistance inscribed within the history of government as its "irreducible opposite" that will allow us to "escape," as Foucault writes, "from the system of Law-Sovereign which has captivated political thought for such a long time."*³⁶

In outlining the intersections between the return of anarchist philosophy and Foucault's study of resistance, this study asserts the primacy of resistance across two main points of intersection. First by thinking through the philosophical and political problems underlying the historical terrain that reduces and structures politics to the spacing an act of government, it is my contention that what must be at stake in outlining the growing relationship between contemporary radical thought and anarchist philosophy hinges on elevating the study of anarchism to a more fundamental level in order to cultivate the emergence of a new theory of the political in its irreducibility to the political as archē. Affirming anarchist theory against the foundations of political philosophy not only seeks to expose the ontological and political principles that continue to sustain Western political practices, but also opens the space to pursue, in the chapters that follow, the implications of the emerging body of anarchist praxis and scholarship along a trajectory following a core tenet of anarchist theory found in Foucault's thought: an agonistic theory of politics as resistance. Paving the critical framework from which to understand the general implications of the turn toward anarchism, I additionally contend that Foucault's problematic of resistance provides a more consistent framework from which to rethink the terms of the political consequent upon the turn toward anarchism. Instead of reducing current debates in radical political theory to anarchism, this study reveals that Foucault intersects with anarchist theory by asserting the concept of resistance as the theoretical and practical framework from which this alternative theory of the political might take place. As such, this study aims to redefine anarchism and

³⁶ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 96-97.

Foucault's philosophy in relation to the fundamental politico-philosophical problem of resistance, while simultaneously posing the primacy of resistance as the vital component from which to rethink the domain of the political in its agonistic and anarchic specificity.

An attempt to trace the logic of the primacy of resistance within Foucault's philosophical and political works and its relation to anarchist political theory will be elaborated in the chapters that follow. While working within the tradition of political theory, my study of Foucault's theory of resistance and anarchist political theory further traverses three inter-disciplinary axioms: Foucault studies, anarchist studies, and the more recent field of resistance studies. Within of these distinct fields of study, several critical insights regarding the significance of resistance to Foucault's political project have been made; and, yet, a thorough study of both Foucault's theory of resistance and its relation to anarchist political has only scarcely been broached. In affirming the place of resistance in Foucault's thought, my own approach seeks to avoid the tendency to reduce Foucault's concept of resistance to the analytics of power; instead, I argue, that the notion of resistance—especially as developed by Foucault—warrants a study in its own right. Furthermore, in staging an intersection between Foucault and anarchism my intention is not, however, to demonstrate that Foucault's productive theory of power somehow amends the shortcomings of classical anarchist thought, as has been claimed by certain anarchist theorists.³⁷ Instead, my intention is to demonstrate to the contrary that rather than overturning a flawed conception of anarchist resistance, Foucault's theory instead compliments the anarchist conception of resistance and emphasizes its key importance within the history of political theory. In this regard, it is necessary to briefly outline certain critical positions from which my own study of the intersections between anarchism and Foucault's theory of resistance proceeds.

Foucault and the Political

³⁷ See: Todd May, "Anarchism from Foucault to Rancière," in *Contemporary Anarchist Studies: An Introductory Anthology of Anarchy in the Academy*, ed. Randall Amster, et al. (New York: Routledge, 2009), 11-14.

First at stake in my analysis of Foucault's study of resistance is a rereading of the relationship between his work and political theory. While Foucault is often celebrated for making key contributions to the study of politics through his retheorization of power relations, as one critic nevertheless suggests, "Foucault did not characterize himself as a political theorist or philosopher and wrote no text intended to sum up his political thought."³⁸ Even so, while Foucault refused to self-identify as a political philosopher, it is well documented that, from the late 1960s until his untimely death in 1984, his work increasingly took a more political turn. In regard to this political turn, Foucault's biographers often point out how his work began to engage more directly with political questions after witnessing a student revolt in Tunisia during 1966,³⁹ which in Foucault's own account "was a true political experience."⁴⁰ Others have identified Foucault's political turn in the events following the revolts in France during May of 1968.⁴¹ Indeed, throughout these years, Foucault's project develops as an archaeological and genealogical analysis of the forms of political rationality coupled with an analytic of power that ultimately culminates in the study of the "history of governmentality."⁴² Taking this genealogy of governmentality as the central critical axis from which to develop an alternative analytic of power, Foucault's project, and the critical gesture that arises out of it, ought to be understood and situated in relation to the larger history of political philosophy. My argument, however, is not simply that Foucault ought to be incorporated within the history of political thought as a central rather than marginal figure, but instead that it is through the logic of resistance continuously developed throughout his work whereby Foucault carves out the most trenchant interventions within the history of political theory.

³⁸ Colin Gordon, introduction to Michel Foucault, *Power*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1994), xi.

³⁹ See: David Macey, *The Lives of Michel Foucault* (Hutchinson: University of Michigan Press, 1993), 191. On the significance of the Tunisian revolts to Foucault's political thought, see the interview between Foucault and Duccio Trombadori titled "Between 'Words' and 'Things' During May '68," in *Michel Foucault: Remarks on Marx*, trans. R. James Goldstein and James Cascaito (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991), 132-140.

⁴⁰ Michel Foucault, *Remarks on Marx*, 134.

⁴¹ See: James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 286. In Foucault's own account of the significance of the events in France in May of 1968, he maintains that "without May of '68 I would never have done the things such as I'm doing today" (*Remarks on Marx*, 140).

⁴² Michel Foucault, "Governmentality," 217.

Despite the importance Foucault continuously attaches to the political nature of his work, the question of politics remains one of the more highly contested topics within his oeuvre. While several theorists have analyzed Foucault's work in relation to the question of politics and the political, full studies of his relation to political theory are lacking in comparison to the amount of work dedicated to other aspects of his thought. As a recent critic argues, then, regardless "of the political importance of Foucault's thought, and perhaps to some extent because of its radicalness, the study of politics is an area in which Foucault was until recently relatively neglected by comparison with other social sciences and literary humanities."⁴³ Traditionally, theorists tend to argue that Foucault intervenes in the history of political thought by developing a radically new analytic of power, and scholars often tend to focus on the question of power while bracketing the corresponding concept of resistance.⁴⁴ It is often the case that Foucault's readers therefore tend to credit his thought for "welcoming the concept of power into the contemporary philosophical landscape," while neglecting to notice how this analytic of power fundamentally turns upon the question of resistance, without which it would lose its specificity.⁴⁵

Despite the copious amount of secondary literature on Foucault, there is a surprisingly minute amount of work done in regard to the concept of resistance as continuously developed throughout his thought. Until recently, works engaging with Foucault's political theory often include short sections dedicated to a conceptual pairing between "power and resistance."⁴⁶ Yet, although Foucault consistently argues for the importance of a theory of resistance, critics and scholars rarely attempt to engage with the notion of resistance as a concept that warrants a full study of its own, nor have they noticed the way in which resistance functions in Foucault as the principle of intelligibility

⁴³ Mark G. E. Kelly, *Foucault and Politics: A Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014), 2.

⁴⁴ Ibid, 105-107.

⁴⁵ Michael Kelly. *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate*. (Boston: MIT Press, 1994), 1.

⁴⁶ For example, see: Clare O'Farrell, *Michel Foucault* (London: Sage Publications, 2005), 99-100; Ellen K. Feder, "Power/Knowledge," in *Michel Foucault: Key Concepts*, ed. Dianna Taylor (Durham: Acumen Publishing, 2011), 63-65; Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault* (New York: Routledge, 2003), 40-42.

from which to reread the history of the political and the question of power.⁴⁷ Thus, while theorists such as Chloë Taylor highlight how “Foucault is perhaps best known as a theorist of power,” the concept of resistance is often disregarded or bracketed as an afterthought to the analytics of power.⁴⁸ In this regard, Brent Pickett observes that while there have been attempts to engage with the question of resistance in Foucault’s thought, “[m]ost discussions of resistance are merely codicils to lengthy examinations of power.”⁴⁹ Standard introductions to Foucault’s thought attest to this idea, and generally include extended discussions on how the notion of power designates one of the key concepts elaborated throughout his work. Thus, in Clare O’Farrell’s introduction to Foucault we read that his “name is linked most famously with the notion of power.”⁵⁰ Similarly, Sara Mills suggests that it is Foucault’s “analysis of power that has most profoundly influenced political thinking.”⁵¹ Although both O’Farrell’s and Mills’ introductions both include a short sections titled “Power and Resistance,” these pieces nevertheless tend to focus more directly on Foucault’s notion of power.

Furthermore, while Foucault’s understanding of politics is most commonly reduced to his theory of power, there have been relatively few full studies written on Foucault’s relation to political theory. John Rajchman’s *Michel Foucault: The Freedom of Philosophy*,⁵² Jon Simons’ *Foucault and the Political*,⁵³ and Mark G. E. Kelly’s texts *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*⁵⁴ and *Foucault and Politics: A Critical Introduction*⁵⁵ are notable in this regard. These texts have made important contributions

⁴⁷ An early notable exception is Todd May, *Between Genealogy and Epistemology: Psychology, Politics, and Knowledge in the Thought of Michel Foucault* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993), 111-128. Here, May, whose work would later become seminal for the development of a theory of poststructural anarchism, dedicates a rare discussion regarding the significance of resistance in Foucault’s thought. More recently, in his text *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, Mark Kelly dedicates a whole chapter to the place of resistance in Foucault (see: chapter 5, 105-121).

⁴⁸ Chloë Taylor, “Biopower,” in *Michel Foucault: Key Concepts* ed. Dianna Taylor. (Durham: Acumen Publishing, 2011), 41.

⁴⁹ Brent Pickett, “Foucault and the Politics of Resistance,” in *Polity* 27, 4, (1996): 446.

⁵⁰ Clare O’Farrell, *Michel Foucault*, 96.

⁵¹ Sara Mills, *Michel Foucault*, 30.

⁵² John Rajchman, *Michel Foucault: The Philosophy of Freedom* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985).

⁵³ Jon Simons, *Foucault and the Political* (London: Routledge, 1995).

⁵⁴ Mark G. E. Kelly, *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault* (New York: Routledge, 2009).

⁵⁵ Mark G. E. Kelly, *Foucault and Politics: A Critical Introduction* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2014).

to the study of Foucault's relationship to political theory, and have also significantly expanded the focus on the question of resistance in his thought. What is particularly significant in these studies is how each of them highlight certain concepts by which Foucault attempts to rethink the limits of political theory. Rajchman, for example, has pinpointed the concept of "freedom" as the theoretical and practical thread that links Foucault's thought to the history of political theory, and has usefully tied the concept of freedom to the elaboration of a Foucauldian "politics of revolt."⁵⁶ Affirming the question of revolt as a vital part of Foucault's critical lexicon, Rajchman's goal is to demonstrate that Foucault's political thought develops a "post-revolutionary politics," whereby Foucault turns toward the analysis of historically specific instances of resistance instead of revolution.⁵⁷ While Rajchman significantly emphasizes the importance of revolt in Foucault's thought and provides an extensive outline of how this approach to politics differs from other major philosophical schools on the left, his text strangely never mentions the notion of resistance, thus neglecting a critical concept from which to understand the questions of freedom and revolt in Foucault's work. In a similar reading, Simons argues that the political theory offered by Foucault ought to be understood in relation to the question of revolt, and ultimately that Foucault's work is elaborated in terms of an "ethic of permanent resistance."⁵⁸ Yet, while Simons clearly highlights the significance of resistance in Foucault's thought, he also argues that "resistance is drastically undertheorized in his work," and thus that "he does not make these arguments clearly."⁵⁹ For Simons, then, Foucault's failure to fully develop the concept of resistance undermines its potential and efficacy. "Without theorizing resistance," Simons argues, "Foucault's own formulations about what makes resistance possible are opaque and allude to some sort of underlying, indomitable of agonal subjectivity that always resists power."⁶⁰ Despite Simons' criticisms, my own approach resists the idea that the idea of resistance is an undertheorized concept in Foucault. As I will demonstrate the concept of resistance is one of the more consistent themes in all of Foucault's work. Furthermore,

⁵⁶ John Rajchman, *Michel Foucault: The Philosophy of Freedom*, 6-7; 43-76.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, 62-65.

⁵⁸ Jon Simons, *Foucault and the Political*, 6.

⁵⁹ *Ibid*, 83.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, 84.

while I affirm alongside Simons that Foucault's thought ultimately turns upon elaborating an ethos of permanent revolt, I nevertheless contend that this critical ethos does not rely on a hidden form of essentialism underlying the very possibility of resistance, but is instead what arises as the very activity of politics.

In general, however, traditional studies of Foucault's relationship to politics are often oriented towards his work in the 1970s in which a critical shift occurred in his thought and was directed toward the analytics of power and the study of governmentality.⁶¹ This critical shift in Foucault's thought leads Kelly to maintain that "all of Foucault's work has to do with power."⁶² In particular, three concepts from Foucault's work during this time—"disciplinary power," "biopower," and "governmentality" have been of particular interest to scholars.⁶³ With these concepts, there can be no doubt that Foucault has increasingly influenced the study of politics, but his influence within the history of political theory has primarily been analyzed in relation to the study of a new analytics of power at the expense of neglecting how the study of power for Foucault itself turns upon the question of resistance as its key theoretical and methodological focal point. It is therefore my contention throughout this study that any critical consideration of Foucault's political theory cannot be achieved without regard to the concept of resistance. Indeed, as Foucault maintains in an interview, the analytic of power is itself made possible through the question of resistance:

[since the] mechanics of power in themselves were never analyzed...this task could only begin after 1968, that is to say, on the basis of daily struggles at grass-

⁶¹ See: Mark G. E. Kelly, *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, 31. Here Kelly reconstructs Foucault's theory of power "across a ten-year period in which his thought changed considerably, into a single, coherent account of power," 31.

⁶² *Ibid*, 31.

⁶³ For example, see: *Michel Foucault: Key Concepts*, ed. Diana Taylor (Durham: Acumen Publishing Limited, 2011). This text breaks Foucault's thought into three primary conceptual categories—power, freedom, and subjectivity. The sections on power include extended focuses on "disciplinary power," "biopower," and "power/knowledge" yet rarely engage with the concept of resistance. Also see: *A Companion to Foucault*, eds. Christopher Falzon, Timothy O'leary and Jana Sawicki (Massachusetts: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013.) This text has a full section dedicated to the conceptual pairing of "power and governmentality" (299-400). With the exception of Jon Simons's "Power, Resistance, and Freedom (301-319), the rest of the essays are devoted to extended discussions on the concept of power in Foucault's thought.

roots level, among those whose fight was located in the fine meshes of the web of power. This was where the concrete nature of power became visible.⁶⁴

While Foucault's readers tend to focus directly on his conception of power, they neglect to realize that such an analytic of power is only made possible in Foucault through an analytic of resistance. To be sure, it is through the study of resistance that reveals the visibility of power as such. This is indeed the key point Foucault continuously reiterates throughout several of his texts, lectures, and interviews. Thus, power is not something that can be analyzed in itself—that is, “power is not a substance”—but rather, as Foucault importantly suggests, that which is contingent upon the permanent potentiality of resistance amongst the dynamic to which power refers.⁶⁵ Indeed, Foucault's own methodology begins with analyzing points of resistance in order to determine the specificity of power, and not the other way around. As Foucault therefore writes in “The Subject and Power,” the development of an analytic of power necessarily “consists in using this resistance as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations.”⁶⁶ Because resistance is what reveals the specificity of power, Foucault argues that “[r]ather than analyzing power from the point of view of its internal rationality, it consists of analyzing power relations through the antagonism of strategies.”⁶⁷ It is this analytic of power, which fundamentally turns upon the question of resistance, that Foucault's thought can be seen as adding a key contribution to the history of political thought. Yet as I will argue, in order to understand the breadth of Foucault's thought, the concept of resistance must be situated in a position of primacy with respect to power and politics. It is in regard to the logic of the primacy of resistance that Foucault designates an alternative principle of intelligibility from which the history of the political and politics can be reread both agonistically and anarchically.

More recently, Kelly's works *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault* and *Foucault and Politics* have both helped to elevate the concept of resistance to a more fundamental position in Foucault's political thought. As Kelly's work makes clear, it is

⁶⁴ Michel Foucault, “Truth and Power,” 116.

⁶⁵ Michel Foucault, “Omnes et Singulatim: Toward a Critique of Political Reason,” in *Power. Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1994), 324.

⁶⁶ Michel Foucault, “Subject and Power,” 329.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 329.

impossible to fully understand Foucault's analytics of power without the concept of resistance. Accordingly, the concept of resistance "is so essential to Foucault's conception of power," Kelly writes, "that it requires a dedicated explanation."⁶⁸ Despite its strengths in regard to reintroducing to importance of resistance to Foucault's political theory, Kelly's work nevertheless suffers from rejecting, a priori, the affinity between Foucault's critical conceptualization of resistance and anarchist political theory.

Although Kelly upholds that Foucault was an "anarchist...inasmuch as he urges us to fight against existing power structures," he further concludes that Foucault is "neither anarchist nor socialist in so far as he does not have an a priori commitment to abolishing the state or capitalism, nor an alternative vision of how society might operate."⁶⁹ Thus, "while Foucault clearly had certain anarchist tendencies," Kelly maintains that Foucault "does not endorse a 'fundamental anarchism' that is opposed to government."⁷⁰ By positing a unique relation between anarchist theory and Foucault through the concept of resistance, my argument is not to suggest the ways in which Foucault could be read as endorsing a "fundamental anarchism" against the history of government. As has already been noted, Foucault often refused to align his thought with political ideologies. Instead, rather, as I will argue in the chapters to follow, Foucault and anarchist political theory intersect by asserting the primacy of resistance as the key concept for rethinking the history of the political in such a way that it cannot simply be reduced to problem of governmentality. Such a critical perspective, however, neither implies for anarchists nor for Foucault a fundamental essence as the fulcrum for resistance, but rather an alternative perspective from which to rethink the terms of the political anarchically and agonistically.

Further at stake in the reconsideration of Foucault's relation to political theory is a rethinking of the question of resistance as it develops in relation to the larger scope of his oeuvre. Critical developments in radical political theory and anarchist studies, as well as the posthumous publications of Foucault's lectures given at the Collège de France from 1971-1984, allow for a rereading of the ways in which the concept of resistance is

⁶⁸ Mark G. Kelly, *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, 105.

⁶⁹ Mark G. Kelly, *Foucault and Politics*, 8.

⁷⁰ Mark G. Kelly, *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, 113.

expanded and developed throughout his career. Rather than taking the analytic of power as the key focal point from which to understand Foucault's thought, I argue that the concept of resistance broaches new and interesting ways from which to draw critical connections between the differing periods of Foucault's work. In this way, rethinking Foucault's study of resistance in relation to the turn toward anarchism additionally requires, I argue, a reevaluation of the concept of resistance as it develops in relation to what Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow refer to as the four stages of Foucault's thought—particularly in relation to transition from what is typically characterised as his genealogical analysis of power relations to his studies of ethics and subjection. Indeed, at the end of their famous study of Foucault, Dreyfus and Rabinow pose the question of resistance as one of the possible focal points for Foucault studies.⁷¹ In this regard, certain theorists have recently invoked the concept of resistance as a new critical arc from which to draw connecting threads between Foucault's different works and conceptual themes. Johanna Oksala has traced—albeit rather briefly—the concept of “resistance” across three thematic points connecting the seemingly disparate periods of Foucault's thought, and argues that his later works ought to be “read as a deliberate attempt to elaborate on his rudimentary account of resistance in *The History of Sexuality* and to answer the criticisms against” his use of resistance.⁷² Similarly, Brent Pickett divides “Foucault's writings into three periods defined by Foucault's different understandings of resistance.”⁷³ Kevin Thompson maintains that Foucault offers two distinct models for resistance—a “tactical reversal” and “aesthetics of existence”—throughout his work.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow. *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1986), 206-207. Here Dreyfus and Rabinow establish three possible questions pertaining to the concept of resistance in Foucault's thought: 1.) given Foucault's accounts of disciplinary power and a carceral society, Dreyfus and Rabinow ask what might be the “resources which enable us to sustain a critical stance;” 2.) They ask “how is the resistance to biopower to be strengthened;” and 3.) Dreyfus and Rabinow posit the need for an affirmative understanding of resistance in Foucault's thought, whereby they ask if there might be “any way to make resistance positive.” Despite, however, the importance Dreyfus and Rabinow stress on the possibilities afforded by the question of resistance in Foucault's thought, this work has only scarcely been accomplished, and the questions remained unanswered.

⁷² Johanna Oksala, “Resistance,” in *The Cambridge Foucault Lexicon*, eds. Lenard Lawlor and John Nale (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 433.

⁷³ Brent Pickett, “Foucault and the Politics of Resistance,” 446.

⁷⁴ Kevin Thompson, “Forms of Resistance: Foucault on Tactical Reversal and Self-formation,” (*Continental Philosophy Review* 36, 2003).

Such preliminary work has broached new ways from which to elevate the concept of resistance to a more fundamental position in Foucault's critical lexicon, and yet no full studies of the concept of resistance in Foucault's thought have been produced.

Foucault and Resistance

A reevaluation of the place of resistance in Foucault's thought and its relation to anarchist political theory furthermore entails an engagement with what has recently come to be known as "resistance studies."⁷⁵ Historically, "resistance" has remained a relatively under researched field in philosophy, political theory, and the social sciences. With the advent of resistance studies, however, more serious attention has been directed toward elevating the concept of resistance to a more fundamental level that warrants its own studies and methodologies. Within this nascent field of study, scholars have invoked the concept of resistance as a key component within several different disciplines. James Scott, whose work has come to be paradigmatic in the field of resistance studies, argues that resistance acts as a sort of "hidden transcript," that reveals an "infrapolitics" at the cusp of political power.⁷⁶ David Couzens-Hoy has usefully highlighted the concept of resistance as a key term for continental theorists including Foucault.⁷⁷ Louise Amoore⁷⁸ and Barry Gills⁷⁹ have both situated resistance as consequent effect of globalization and invoke the concept of resistance as a key component of global studies; Stephen

⁷⁵ In the spring of 2005, Mona Lilja and Stellan Vinthagen organized a conference and subsequent research forum for what is now referred to as "Resistance Studies." With the aim of establish the criteria from which resistance might warrant its own study within the social sciences and humanities, the goal of resistance studies is "establish cooperation between researchers interested in understanding practices of resistance, and its connections to power and social change." (Lilja and Vinthagen, "Mission Statement," resistance studies.org, 2005). While traditionally, the concept of "resistance" has been historically neglected in political theory and the social sciences, the advent of "resistance studies" has thus helped to elevate the study of resistance to a more serious level across a wide-range of disciplines.

⁷⁶ James Scott, *Domination and the Arts of Resistance* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1992), 19.

⁷⁷ David Couzens-Hoy, *Critical Resistance: From Poststructuralism to Post-Critique* (Cambridge: MIT University Press, 2005).

⁷⁸ Louise Amoore, *The Global Resistance Reader* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2005).

⁷⁹ Barry K. Gills, "Introduction: Globalization and the Politics of Resistance," in *Globalization and the Politics of Resistance*, ed. Barry K. Gills. (London: MacMillan, 2000), 3-11. Also see: Jackie Smith and Hank Johnston, "Introduction: Globalization and Resistance," in *Globalization and Resistance: Transnational Dimensions of Social Movements*, eds. Hank Johnson and Jackie Smith, (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2002), 1-12.

Duncombe⁸⁰ has addressed the problem of resistance in relation to cultural studies; Benita Parry⁸¹ has theorized resistance in relation to postcolonial studies; Catherine Eschle⁸² has made a critical link between resistance, the anti-globalization movement and the field of International Relations; while Mona Lilja and Stellen Vinthagen⁸³ have contributed to a heightened interest in the study of resistance by formally establishing the field of “resistance studies.” With such elevated interest in the study of resistance, Hollander and Einwohner maintain that “we are now experiencing a flood of research and theory which purports to the issue of resistance.”⁸⁴

While within resistance studies there exists a plurality of definitions and concepts employed with regard to the concept of resistance, what holds resistance studies together is, as Vinthagen maintains, the idea that “resistance needs analytically speaking to be” understood as a completely “different phenomenon from power.”⁸⁵ That the concept of resistance ought to be understood as fundamentally different in kind from power has immense consequences for political theory and philosophy, consequences that will be unpacked with a critical reading of Foucault’s work and its relation to anarchist theory. To be sure, the advent of resistance studies opens new possibilities for understanding the significance of resistance in Foucault’s thought. Yet, while the study of resistance is reappearing as a concept of particular interest throughout several differing disciplines, the contributions made by Foucault to the field of resistance studies have been widely ignored. Although the increased attention paid to the importance of the concept of resistance would appear to warrant further study into the question of resistance as developed throughout Foucault’s career, scholars involved in resistance studies have

⁸⁰ Stephen Duncombe, introduction to *Cultural Resistance Reader*, ed. Stephen Duncombe (New York: WW Norton, 2002), 1-12.

⁸¹ Benita Parry, “Resistance Theory/Theorizing Resistance, Or Two Cheers for Nativism,” in *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique*, (New York: Routledge, 2004), 37-54.

⁸² Catherine Eschle, “Constructing the Anti-Globalization Movement,” in *Critical Theories, International Relations, and the Anti-Globalization Movement: The Politics of Global Resistance* eds. Catherine Eschle and Bice (New York: Routledge, 2005), 17-35.

⁸³ See: Mona Lilja and Stellen Vinthagen, “Resistance,” in *Encyclopedia of Activism and Social Justice*, eds. Gary L. Anderson and Kathryn G Herr (Sage Publications, 2007), 1216.

⁸⁴ Rachel Einwohner and Jocelyn Hollander, “Conceptualizing Resistance,” *Sociological Forum*, 19 (2004): 533.

⁸⁵ Stellen Vinthagen, “Understanding “Resistance”: Exploring Definitions, Perspectives, Forms, and Implications,” presented at the Resistance Studies Network conference held on December 6th, 2007 at Gothenburg University.

remained strangely mute on Foucault, and have further sought to discount his critical conception of resistance as self-refuting in terms of his analytics of power. As Vinthagen maintains: “while Foucault made a paradigmatic turn in our understanding [of] *power/resistance* he is not very helpful in understanding *power/resistance*.”⁸⁶ As his choice italicization suggests Vinthagen, like critics before him, emphasizes that Foucault only focuses on the analytics of power while neglecting a full study the question of resistance. Thus for Vinthagen, Foucault studies power “with resistance always in brackets, and he did it from the view of power.”⁸⁷ In this respect, my own study proposes a contrary reading regarding the place of resistance in Foucault’s thought; rather than theorizing resistance from the perspective of power, it is my contention that Foucault’s analytic of power fundamentally depends on elaborating a theory of resistance as the key component that reveals the specificity of power relations and the political as such. As a whole, the discipline of resistance studies tends to focus on primarily sociological studies and problems, while neglecting the relation of resistance to political theory, and as such have overlooked an important aspect of Foucault’s work. As I will argue, however, Foucault’s assertion that resistance is primacy with power fundamentally offers a new way to reread the history of politics from the perspective of resistance, thus contributing to the discipline of resistance studies in several ways that should not be overlooked.

Additionally, while there have been several significant contributions pertaining to the concept of resistance in Foucault, the literature on the subject is nevertheless lacking in comparison to the focus dedicated to his analytics of power. In this way, although Brent Pickett correctly maintains that “it is impossible to comprehend Michel Foucault’s politics without fully understanding his concept of resistance,” scholars and critics of Foucault historically tend to disagree on the consistency, efficacy, and practical nature of the political possibilities afforded by his work regarding the question of resistance.⁸⁸ It is for this reason that Oksala maintains that “resistance is one of the most contested and divisive concepts in Foucault’s thought.”⁸⁹ The concept of resistance is divisive in Foucault because it holds the key to understanding his analytic of power. Yet, it

⁸⁶ Ibid, 3

⁸⁷ Ibid, 3.

⁸⁸ Brent Pickett, “Foucault and the Politics of Resistance,” 445.

⁸⁹ Johanna Oksala, “Resistance,” 432.

contested for the way in which several scholars argue that Foucault lacks a clear theory of resistance. In this regard, Kelly notes that although the concept of “resistance entered Foucault’s technical vocabulary somewhat after power,” he further suggests that “Foucault’s reconception of power requires a reexamination of resistance.”⁹⁰ As such, the concept of resistance often appears secondary in relation to Foucault’s study of power and governmentality. To be sure, scholars have never agreed on the consistency of resistance in Foucault’s thought. There have nevertheless been attempts to trace the concept of resistance through a variety of other connecting concepts spread throughout Foucault’s different works in order to locate a more consistent pattern pertaining to the question of resistance in Foucault’s thought. While some theorists have looked for precursors to the concept of resistance in Foucault’s thought in terms of “the outside,”⁹¹ and the concept of “freedom,”⁹² others like Judith Butler have argued that the concept of resistance in Foucault’s thought is later replaced with the ethics of “virtue.”⁹³ Furthermore, Arnold Davidson maintains that resistance is further revised in Foucault’s late work as an ethos of “counter-conduct.”⁹⁴ While each of these studies has advanced the study of resistance in Foucault by tracing its growth alongside other key concepts, it is my contention that the concept of resistance in Foucault requires a full study of its own in order to fully understand how several other themes in Foucault find their respective bases in a theory of resistance.

Regardless of these attempts to affirm the significance of resistance in Foucault, the concept is perhaps the most contested term in all of his critical lexicon, and scholars rarely agree on how to conceive of the question of resistance in Foucault. Customarily, Foucault’s critics often interpret the question of resistance in one of three manners. First, it is argued that Foucault’s conception of power—especially as depicted in *Discipline and Punish* and the *History of Sexuality*—presents a ubiquitous and all-encompassing theory

⁹⁰ Mark Kelly, *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, 105.

⁹¹ See: Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Sean Hand (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 70-94.

⁹² Johanna Oksala, *Foucault on Freedom* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Sergei Prozorov, *Foucault, Freedom, Sovereignty* (Vermont: Ashgate Publishing, 2007).

⁹³ Judith Butler, “What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault’s Virtue,” in *The Political: Readings in Continental Philosophy*, (London: Basil Blackwell, 2002), 212-228.

⁹⁴ Arnold Davidson, “In Praise of Counter-Conduct,” in *History of Human Sciences*, 24, (2011), 25-41.

of power that paralyzes rather than promotes resistance. In this regard Duccio Trombadori writes “[t]here is no escaping the impression that Foucault, far from providing a new stimulus to demands for liberation, limits himself to describing a mechanism of pure imprisonment.”⁹⁵ Moreover, critics such as Habermas⁹⁶ and Thomas McCarthy⁹⁷ have suggested that Foucault’s concept of resistance is fundamentally self-refuting in terms of his analysis of power. While acknowledging that Foucault often directs his attention to the question of resistance, Nancy Fraser⁹⁸ and Hartstock⁹⁹ have argued that Foucault comes close to affirming the absolute necessity of resistance without either prescribing what such forms of resistance might look like, or a specific normative criterion from which the activity of resistance might be justified. For Fraser, a Foucauldian conception of resistance therefore fails on two accounts. Foucault’s theory of resistance first fails insofar as he does not specify who is resisting and what is to be resisted, and again since he refuses to introduce certain normative criteria whereby one might be able to explain “why domination ought to be resisted.”¹⁰⁰ Still others argue that “Foucauldian radicalism fails, in effect, to hypothesize another possible response beyond the pure and simple ‘refusal of politics.’”¹⁰¹ As we will see, Foucault’s theory of resistance, on the contrary, is not developed in terms of a pure negation, but also in terms of ethical struggle toward new forms of ungovernable subjectivities animated in practices of resistance. In this respect, it is my contention that these approaches either come short of recognizing the way in which the development of a concept of resistance undermines the history of governmentality in crucial ways which help to redefine the scope of the political as a genuine anarchic possibility, or how the continuity between Foucault’s political and

⁹⁵ Duccio Trombadori, introduction to Michel Foucault in *Remarks on Marx*, trans. R. James Goldstein and James Cascaito (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991), 20.

⁹⁶ See: Jürgen Habermas, “Some Questions Concerning the Theory of Power: Foucault Again,” in *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate*, ed. Michael Kelly. (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), 79-108.

⁹⁷ Thomas McCarthy, “The Critique of Impure Reason: Foucault and the Frankfurt School,” in *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate*, ed. Michael Kelly (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994), 258.

⁹⁸ Nancy Fraser, “Foucault on Modern Power: Empirical Insights and Normative Confusions,” in *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Minnesota: Polity Press, 1989), 29.

⁹⁹ See: N. Hartstock, “Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?” in *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. L. Nicholson (New York: Routledge, 1990), 157-175.

¹⁰⁰ Nancy Fraser, “Foucault on Modern Power,” 29.

¹⁰¹ Duccio Trombadori, introduction to Michel Foucault, *Remarks on Marx*, 22.

ethical periods reveals a productive tension between resistance, politics, and ethics key to understanding the entirety of his works. Despite these claims from Foucault's critics regarding the seemingly impossible task of developing a coherent political theory of resistance, the question of resistance, I argue, is not only central to understanding the breadth of Foucault's thought, but vital to the possibility of rethinking the domain of the political against the paradigm of governmentality.

Foucault and Anarchism

Finally, affirming the relation between Foucault's theory of resistance and anarchist political theory requires and engagement with the more recent turn toward "anarchist studies" in continental thought.¹⁰² With the turn toward "anarchist studies," significant contributions have been made across a wide-range of disciplines including political philosophy, anthropology, political science, economics, history, sociology, and anthropology. Commenting on this growth of anarchist ideas, Randall Amster suggests that "in recent years, anarchism has enjoyed a resurgence among activists and academics alike."¹⁰³ The rebirth of anarchist theory has not gone unnoticed within in studies of political theory. With the development of "anarchist studies" breaking new ground from which to critically engage with the history of politics, Simon Critchley has argued for an "anarchist turn in politics and our thinking of the political."¹⁰⁴ Similarly, Saul Newman's work affirms anarchism "as the very horizon of radical politics," and has made significant contributions to rethinking the history of political theory through anarchist perspectives.¹⁰⁵ While critical turns toward anarchism have helped to break new ways from which to reread the history of political theory, the turn toward anarchism has

¹⁰² "Anarchist Studies" is a relatively new field of inquiry which has begun to redefine anarchism's place within the academy, while helping to situate anarchist ideas amongst several key debates in political theory and the social sciences. See: Randall Amster, Abraham DeLeon, Luis A. Fernandez, Anthony J. Nocella, II, and Deric Shannon, "Introduction" to *Contemporary Anarchist Studies: An Introductory Anthology of Anarchism in the Academy* (New York: Routledge, 2009), 1-7.

¹⁰³ Randall Amster, *Anarchism Today* (California: Praeger, 2012), xviii.

¹⁰⁴ Simon Critchley, introduction to *The Anarchist Turn* eds. Jacob Blumenfeld, Chiara Bottici and Simon Critchley. (London: Pluto Press, 2013), 2.

¹⁰⁵ Saul Newman, *The Politics of Postanarchism*, 2.

additionally opened up new critical territory from which to understand Foucault's critical theory of resistance.

While Foucault by no means self-identified as an anarchist, he does often invoke examples from historical anarchist movements in support of his ideas.¹⁰⁶ The methodological approach to unmasking the genealogy of historical struggle does indeed suggest a retheorization of the practices of resistance which, as Foucault claims, derive their collective force from an "anarchist thematic."¹⁰⁷ Towards the end of his career, Foucault even suggests that "what should of course be studied" is "European and American anarchism."¹⁰⁸ Foucault, unfortunately, completed no such study. Nevertheless, in recent scholarship the collected works of Foucault are coming to play an increasingly pivotal role in the retheorization of the political consequent upon the resurgent turn toward anarchism within the contemporary political landscape. Over the past two decades, to be sure, Foucault's thought has been increasingly mobilized by anarchist philosophers in a variety of important ways. The intersections between Foucault's works and anarchism have been most clearly elucidated in the thought arising out of the works associated with what has been called, following Todd May, Saul Newman, and Lewis Call respectively, "poststructural anarchism,"¹⁰⁹ "postanarchism,"¹¹⁰

¹⁰⁶ See for example: Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), 291-292. Here, Foucault draws direct connections between anarchism and the political problem of delinquency, which he takes as the basis for the elaboration of political indiscipline in contrast to the analytics of disciplinary power. Additionally, in "The Subject and Power," while attempting to rethink the domain of the political from the point of view of an ongoing struggle with power, Foucault makes the claim that the examples of historical struggle he takes as the basis for developing the idea of resistance are "anarchistic struggles" (330). Similarly, in the first lecture from *Society Must Be Defended*, Foucault claims that elaboration of the political problem of struggle develops in relation to "an anarchistic thematic" (5). Additionally, in *Society Must Be Defended*, Foucault utilizes and invokes the historical movements of the Levellers and Diggers—two movements which have often been connected to anarchism—as examples historical struggle (58, 102, 107, 108-109).

¹⁰⁷ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 5.

¹⁰⁸ Michel Foucault, *The Courage of Truth. Lectures at the Collège de France 1984*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2011), 185.

¹⁰⁹ See: Todd May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism* (Pennsylvania: Penn State Press, 1994); "Is Post-Structuralist Theory Anarchist?" In *New Perspectives on Anarchism*, eds. Nathan Jun and Shane Wahl (New York: Lexington Books, 2010), 25-39, and "Anarchism from Foucault to Rancière." *Contemporary Anarchist Studies: An Introductory Anthology of Anarchy in the Academy*. Ed. Randall Amster. London: Routledge, 2009. (11-17).

¹¹⁰ See: Saul Newman *The Politics of Postanarchism*. (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), and *From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power* (New York: Lexington Books, 2001.)

and “postmodern anarchism.”¹¹¹ May’s work is particularly ground-breaking in this regard, and his text *The Political Philosophy of Post-Structural Anarchism* provides a clear outline of how Foucault can be read within an anarchist context. In this respect, May argues that Foucault’s works in general “offer a compelling anarchist vision that at once emerges from and continues the anarchist tradition.”¹¹² With a basis in May’s work, Newman further contends that an engagement with the relation between Foucault and anarchism will “enable us to further engage the possibility of resistance to power.”¹¹³ In his analysis of Foucault’s relation to the history of anarchism, Jimmy Klausen argues that “Foucault’s anarchism in fact extends, or at least can be read as extending, to a new theorization of anarchistic practice.”¹¹⁴ Such preliminary advancements, especially in May and Newman’s work, help to uncover new possibilities for exploring the still nascent relationship between Foucault’s work and anarchism, and as such mark a critical turning point from which my own study proceeds.¹¹⁵ Yet May and Newman both underestimate the importance of resistance in Foucault’s thought, and tend to argue instead that it is his analytic of power, and not his theory of resistance, that allows for a connection between anarchism and Foucault to be made. As I will argue in a later chapter, postanarchist approaches to Foucault often fail in affirming the potential of resistance in Foucault’s work, mistakenly focusing instead on the ways which his theory of power helps to overcome the certain limits in ‘classical’ anarchist thought, in order to “theorize the possibility of resistance without essentialist guarantees.”¹¹⁶

With the notable exception of postanarchism, traditional scholars of Foucault, as I will demonstrate throughout this project, either deny any possible link between anarchism

¹¹¹ See: Lewis Call, *Postmodern Anarchism* (Oxford: Lexington Books, 2002).

¹¹² Todd May, “Anarchism from Foucault to Rancière,” 11.

¹¹³ Saul Newman. *From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power*, 75.

¹¹⁴ Jimmy Klausen, “The Late Foucault’s Premodernity,” in *How Not to Be Governed*, eds. Jimmy Klausen and James Martel (New York: Lexington Books, 2011), 125.

¹¹⁵ For example, see: Todd May, *Between Genealogy and Epistemology: Psychology, Politics, and Knowledge in the Thought of Michel Foucault* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993); *The Philosophy of Foucault* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2006); “Anarchism from Foucault to Rancière,” in *Contemporary Anarchist Studies: An Introductory Anthology of Anarchy in the Academy* eds. Randal Amster, et al. (New York: Routledge, 2009) 11-17; “Is Post-Structuralist Theory Anarchist?,” in *Post-Anarchism: A Reader* eds. Duane Rousselle and Süreyya Evren. (London: Pluto Press, 2011), 41-45. Also see: Saul Newman, *From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power* (New York: Lexington Books, 2001), 75-96.

¹¹⁶ Saul Newman, *From Bakunin to Lacan*, 157.

and Foucault, or attempt to reduce Foucault's thought to a politically weak, or generic anarchism. To be sure, Foucault's indebted refusal to either engage in political polemics or to outline a program for political emancipation has led to a wide-range of criticism and confusion regarding the practicality of his political theory.¹¹⁷ In an interview from 1984 following the question "[w]here *do* you stand?" (original emphasis), Foucault's response highlights his refusal to identify with a particular political party or school of thought. Foucault responds:

I think I have in fact been situated in most squares on the political checkerboard, one after another and sometimes simultaneously: as anarchist, leftist, ostentatious or disguised Marxist, nihilist, explicit or secret anti-Marxist, technocrat in the service of Gaullism, new liberal and so on...None of these descriptions is important by itself; taken together, on the other hand, they mean something. And I must admit that I rather like what they mean.¹¹⁸

Refusing to take a firm political position, has led Foucault to be criticized for invoking a "skeptical apolitical stance," culminating in a form of "radicalism pushed to the extreme of nihilism."¹¹⁹ An early critic of Foucault's political theory, Michael Walzer, has summarized Foucault's political thought in terms of an "infantile leftism,"¹²⁰ wherein Foucault displays a commitment to "anarchism/nihilism."¹²¹ Similarly, in an interview from 1983, Foucault is referred to as "an anarchistic heir of Nietzsche."¹²² Furthermore, often frustrated at the lack of a strict philosophical system linking together the seemingly disparate periods characterizing Foucault's thought, scholars often comment that Foucault's "fondness for remaining elusive and unclassifiable" undermines his attempts

¹¹⁷ Michel Foucault, "Polemics, Politics, and Problematizations." *Ethics, Subjectivity, and Truth. Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997), 111.

¹¹⁸ *Ibid*, 113.

¹¹⁹ Sara Mills. "Foucault's Intellectual and Political Development." in *Michel Foucault*. (New York: Routledge, 2003), 16.

¹²⁰ Michael Walzer, "The Politics of Michel Foucault," in *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, ed. D. Couzens Hoy (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 51.

¹²¹ *Ibid*, 61.

¹²² "Politics and Ethics: An Interview," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Vintage, 2010,) 375. This interview was conducted in April of 1983 in Berkeley by Paul Rabinow, Charles Taylor, Martin Jay, Richard Rorty, and Leo Lowenthal.

to rethink the limits of political philosophy.¹²³ Indeed, Foucault often reiterates the claim that neither the task of philosophy, nor the goal of political thought is to prescribe (as in Lenin's terms) 'what is to be done.' The refusal to outline or prescribe a normative political theory has led some critics to dismiss Foucault's work as "self-indulgent radical chic,"¹²⁴ while Habermas famously refers to Foucault as a "young conservative"¹²⁵ whose thought lacks a practical theory of emancipation.

The position of Habermas is further shared by Walzer who criticizes the political possibilities offered in Foucault's work. While Walzer highlights the importance of resistance in Foucault's thought by suggesting that Foucault's political theory is a "tool kit not for revolution but for local resistance," he radically denies the effectivity of the question of resistance in Foucault's thought, and takes it as a simple refusal of politics.¹²⁶ For Walzer, it is through the state and not movements of revolt, as Foucault argues, that make resistance possible: "it is the state that holds open or radically shuts down the possibility of local resistance."¹²⁷ According to Walzer, insofar as Foucault radically denies the state as an effective model for political change, the concept of resistance in Foucault's thought is the "catastrophic weakness of his political theory."¹²⁸ Despite his intentions, however, Walzer points toward the way in which Foucault's concept of resistance aligns him with anarchist thought. With the concept of resistance acting as the key component of Foucault's political thought, Walzer claims that it is "for this reason Foucault's politics are commonly called anarchist, and anarchism certainly had its moments in his thought."¹²⁹

While in the chapters that follow, I will engage more thoroughly in the criticisms launched against the question of resistance in Foucault's thought, as well as his approaches to the questions of politics and anarchism, this study offers a rather unorthodox reading of these criticisms and affirms the possibilities of what his harsher

¹²³ Christopher Falzon and Timothy O'Leary, "Introduction: Foucault's Philosophy," in *Foucault and Philosophy*, eds. Falzon and O'Leary (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell Publishing, 2010), 3.

¹²⁴ Richard Rorty, "Foucault and Epistemology," in *Foucault: A Critical Reader*. Ed. David Couzens Hoy. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986.), 47.

¹²⁵ Jürgen Habermas, "Modernity and Postmodernity," in *New German Critique*, 22 (1981): 3.

¹²⁶ Michael Walzer, "The Politics of Michel Foucault," 55.

¹²⁷ *Ibid*, 66.

¹²⁸ *Ibid*, 67.

¹²⁹ *Ibid*, 60.

critics tend to deny. Whereas critics of Foucault tend to deny the possibility of an emancipatory political theory in Foucault's thought, often pejoratively reducing his work to a call for a benign anarchism, I affirm Foucault's relationship to anarchist political theory, and further assert that it is with the framework afforded by anarchism that Foucault's contributions to political theory can be brought to light with respect to the question of resistance. An attempt to trace the relation between Foucault and anarchism can be better elaborated, I argue, in the ways in which he rethinks an alternative theory of historical struggle which, not only reveals the counter-history of governmentality through the logic of the primacy of resistance, but also that which, in doing so, fundamentally denies the monopolization of the political by the state and the paradigm of government. As I will argue, it is through the question of resistance—indeed the primacy of resistance—that Foucault's work intersects with anarchist theory most forcibly. Foucault's work internally turns upon and develops an affinity with anarchism through his concept of resistance, while anarchism is what marks the critical threshold from which to locate the political possibilities offered in Foucault's theory of resistance.

Towards a Theory of the Primacy of Resistance

The above discussion was set in order to create a preliminary critical framework from which to orient and situate Foucault's theory of resistance within the history of anarchist political theory in a way that still needs to be explored today. As I will demonstrate throughout this project, with the technical vocabulary of resistance, Foucault's project works toward reversing the general tenets of political theory. Posing the problem of resistance against the history of governmentality not only seeks to expose the ontological and political principles that continue to sustain Western political practices and thought, but, more importantly, attempts to open a space for political praxis in which the very notion of struggle with governmentality becomes the central, operative force of politics. Until the more recent publications of Foucault's lecture series during his tenure at the Collège de France, the complexities of his engagement with the questions of resistance to the history of governmentality have remained subordinate to the study of the two

interrelated poles comprising the general turn toward the biopolitical.¹³⁰ In Foucault's work, however, it is this very persistence of power that pushes him toward rethinking the conditions, origins and principles of legitimacy of political power, but also the possibility of a radical politics of resistance parallel, yet heterogeneous, to the history of the governmental. Although the concept of resistance enters Foucault's critical lexicon later than the concept of power, it nonetheless forms the framework from which he begins to think through the problem of politics; resistance as I will argue is not an isolated concept in Foucault's thought, and its presence stretches through to his last works. Rather than crediting Foucault with developing a philosophical concept of power, Foucault might therefore be better known as a philosopher of resistance. As a theorist of resistance, it is my contention that what is crucial about Foucault's work is how he reintroduces the concept of resistance into the field of politics and political philosophy in such a way that a critical caesura between the political as *archē* and the political as *agōn* is revealed. Indeed, under the logic of the primacy of resistance, it is my contention that Foucault's political theory ultimately unmasks the field of the political in its anarchic and agonistic specificity. Rather than tracing the emergence of the category of the political to the advent of government and state sovereignty, the permanent potentiality of resistance amongst the dynamic in which politics refers and consists reopens the field of the political as an agonistic dynamic of struggle between power exercised as government and the counter-historical movements of resistance. As *agōn*, the primacy of resistance not only designates a permanent component of politics but, more fundamentally, the condition of possibility from which power relations are transformed into a relation of struggle.

¹³⁰ On the transfer from sovereign power to the poles of disciplinary and regulatory biopolitical control see the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*. Referring to the direct increase in the interest and focus of observing and optimizing the capabilities of individual bodies, the first pole "characterized the disciplines"—what Foucault calls "an anatomo-politics of the human body"—and is set to integrate the use of the body into mechanized systems of efficiency and economic controls (138). The second, and Foucault is clear about this sequential ordering, refers to the way in which the control over the disciplined and normalized body allows for the larger integration of "regulatory controls" and the consequent mobilization of a "biopolitics of the population." Herein, Foucault claims that biopower "formed somewhat later" than anatomo-power (139).

Through Foucault we can begin to point toward the ways in which the engagement with the history of political power reveals not simply the set of practices of resistance that turn against it, but that the fundamental fact of revolt reveals the possibility of a life emancipated from the paradigm of government —indeed, of other possibilities “turned back against the system that was bent on controlling it.”¹³¹ While Foucault explicitly situates his work in relation to the complexities of governmentality as the site for political and philosophical problems, what is crucial is that he simultaneously unmask and posits the possibility of a non-sovereign politics of resistance. This history of revolt, which reveals the counter-history of archaic governmentality, is precisely the point in which Foucault attempts to carve out a new terrain for political theory. Although it is often overlooked in his work, or simply dismissed as the affirmation of a “quasi-anarchism,”¹³² Foucault’s engagement with the history of governmentality is set to demonstrate the potential to slip into its opposite, what he calls in one work a “tactical reversal” and in another the “counter-power” of the primacy of resistance.¹³³ That is, Foucault reopens the site of the political as fundamentally cognisant of the very possibility of anarchism, of being-without-government through what Kropotkin refers to as the “spirit of revolt.”¹³⁴ If as Foucault suggests in “What is Critique?” that the history of politics has been fundamentally bound to the political question of how to govern, the counter-histories revived throughout his work are guided by a question that is not only irreducible to the history of the former, but perhaps even the principle question posed by anarchism. Foucault writes that the “perpetual question” that needs to be asked in relation to the history of political philosophy, and one that his work is set to revive, takes the form of asking “how not to be governed.”¹³⁵ Indeed, according to Foucault born alongside the history of sovereign power and the art of governing is the counter-history of what he pointedly refers to as the “art of not being governed.”¹³⁶ It is this “art of not

¹³¹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 145.

¹³² See Richard Rorty’s critique of Foucault in “Moral Identity and Private Autonomy,” in *Michel Foucault: Philosopher*. Ed. T.J Armstrong. (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992), 331.

¹³³ See: Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 157; and *Discipline and Punish*, 219.

¹³⁴ Peter Kropotkin, “The Spirit of Revolt,” in *Anarchism: A Collection of Revolutionary Writings* ed. Roger Baldwin. (New York: Dover Publications, 2002), 35-43.

¹³⁵ Michel Foucault, “What is Critique?”, 44.

¹³⁶ *Ibid*, 44. Given that Foucault’s lectures on governmentality, specifically those in *Security, Territory, Population* are oriented toward the rationale that allows for politics to assume the form of an art of

being governed” that Foucault both takes as the key referent from which a new political theory beyond the paradigm of government might be thought, as well as the ethical basis for a form of politics conceived as resistance to power exercised as government.

Thus, what is of absolute importance, yet highly under-theorized in Foucault studies is, however, that alongside the analytics of power and the study of governmentality, Foucault begins to develop a theory of historical struggle and resistance against the techniques of governmentality. The question regarding “how not to be governed” is, for Foucault, the ethical framework from which a new form of political thought might begin; politics as such must be reframed in terms of “the art of not being governed.” When Foucault famously argues for a regicide in political theory, it is my contention that he is specifically concerned with addressing the possibilities of resistance that counter the forms of power exercised as government. In *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault highlights this theme as a central component to his work. Against the history of governmentality, Foucault writes:

There must be a moment, when breaking all the bonds of obedience, the population will really have the right, not in juridical terms, but in terms of essential and fundamental rights, to break any bonds of obedience it has with the state and, rising up against it, to say: My law...must replace the rules of obedience. Consequently, there is an eschatology that will take the form of the absolute right to revolt, to insurrection, and to breaking all the bonds of obedience: the right to revolution itself.¹³⁷

It is through the concept of resistance and the “right to revolt” that Foucault saw the greatest potential to challenge, and perhaps even negate, his theory of governmentality. To be sure, Foucault intervenes in the history of political philosophy by attempting to think politics against the reduction to the first principle of archaic governmental power. Indeed, it is in Foucault that the question of resistance reappears as a key term thus far neglected in political philosophy.

government, it is clear that with this “art of not being governed” that Foucault wants pose the possibility of an alternative narrative of the history of power.

¹³⁷ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 356.

Furthermore, with the concept of resistance acting as the theoretical framework from which to rethink the notion of politics, a critical conceptualization of resistance additionally acts as the point from which to rethink the history of the political and political theory. For Foucault, then, resistance forms the point of “extreme brightness” in political theory because it means that “we ought to have the courage to begin anew.”¹³⁸ Understood in this way, resistance means:

We have to abandon every dogmatic principle and question one by one the validity of all the principles that have been the source of oppression. From the point of view of political thought, we are, so to speak, at point zero. We have to construct another political thought, another political imagination, and teach anew the vision of a future.¹³⁹

Here, Foucault importantly points toward the way in which the very possibility of an alternative theory of the political requires an engagement with the question of resistance. Yet, this alternative theory of the political is simultaneously posed with a reconceptualization of what constitutes the essence of politics. In the manuscripts to the lectures compiled as *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault points toward what it might mean to construct another form of political thought through the question of resistance. Foucault writes: “politics is nothing more and nothing less than that which is born with resistance to governmentality, the first revolt, the first confrontation.”¹⁴⁰ As Foucault indicates here, “politics” is analogous to the emergence of resistance and revolt. In this way, although resistance for Foucault is directly immersed within relations of power, politics nonetheless refers to a permanent sphere of agonism “born with resistance to governmentality.” In its most basic sense, then, a Foucauldian theory of politics designates the space of “resistance to governmentality.” In other words politics, according to Foucault, emerges as a paradigm of revolt. If politics, for Foucault, is that which is born with resistance to governmentality, then it is my contention that the logic of

¹³⁸ Michel Foucault, “Dialogue Between Michel Foucault and Baqir Parham,” in Janet Afary and Kevin Anderson, *Foucault and the Iranian Revolution: Gender and the Seductions of Islamism* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2005), 185.

¹³⁹ Ibid, 185.

¹⁴⁰ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 217 n. 5.

the primacy of resistance directly informs an entirely different analytic framework from which to rethink the history of the political.

Although work on Foucault's approach to a theory of resistance is at times both skeptical and evasive, what Foucault outlines in his fifth thesis on power in *The History of Sexuality* is key to understanding the way in which he hopes to re-evaluate the terms of the political beyond the paradigm of government. Indeed, this thesis is the decisive moment in Foucault's thought that provides the possibility for a critical stance against the history of governmentality. That resistance is present in a position of non-exteriority to power, means that resistance is part of the relation of power itself—that is, resistance is “inscribed in the latter as an irreducible opposite,” and as such is always primary with power.¹⁴¹ As Foucault clarifies in a later interview, resistance is fundamental to a retheorization of the political because:

It means that we always have possibilities, there are always possibilities of changing the system... You see, if there was no resistance, there would be no power relations. Because it would simply be a matter of obedience... So resistance comes first, and resistance remains superior to the force of the process; power relations are obliged to change with resistance. So I think that resistance is the *key word*, in this dynamic... To say no is the minimum form of resistance. But, of course, at times that is very important. You have to say no as a decisive form of resistance (original emphasis).¹⁴²

As the “key word” in the dynamic between power and resistance, it is clear that Foucault begins to associate politics with the two-fold operative character of resistance. First, the potential space of resistance inherent to relations of power means that wherever there is the possibility of power there is also, and consequently, the space where “we always have possibilities”—that is, potential for resistance. In this way, “resistance comes first”—that is, resistance is primary with power. Additionally, this primacy of resistance is the condition of possibility for “changing the system,” the act of opening up the spacing of the political in order to transform it. Finally, Foucault additionally points toward

¹⁴¹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 116.

¹⁴² Michel Foucault, “Sex, Power, and the Politics of Identity,” in *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth. Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997), 167-168.

something fundamental regarding the logic of power itself. The condition of possibility of power is neither the state nor the paradigm of government; instead, rather, the condition of possibility of power is itself resistance, without which “there would be no power relations.” With the primacy of resistance Foucault fundamentally reverses the very principles of traditional political theory. By understanding resistance as being primary with power, what I refer to as the primacy of resistance is set to overcome the allegations from certain critics of Foucault that he presents a picture of power that stifles rather than develops resistance.¹⁴³ The fact that resistance is present wherever there is power does not mean that power is inescapable; rather, the primacy of resistance means precisely that power is itself relational with its own adversarial force, and cannot be conceived beyond this relation. As Deleuze reminds us in his study of Foucault, what is crucial is that “the final word on power is that *resistance comes first*” (original emphasis).¹⁴⁴ It is not therefore power that is inescapable, but resistance; in its position of primacy, resistance is the condition of possibility of both power and politics—that is, resistance is what allows for the category of the political to emerge as such. It is this potentiality inherent to power that ultimately allows for a preliminary reinterpretation of Foucault’s fifth thesis as follows: if the potentiality for resistance is inherent wherever there is power—that is, inasmuch as the history of governmentality is simultaneously the expression of its own counter-history—and politics is that which becomes manifest through “resistance to governmentality,” then resistance can be seen as the *anarchist invariant of political power* and the history of governmentality.

Through the technical vocabulary of resistance, Foucault fundamentally reinvents an alternative way to reread and reevaluate the history of politics and political theory. Although Foucault is still criticized for undermining the potential for a grounded political position throughout his work, as early as 1968 Foucault begins to describe the arc of his work in terms of developing a theory of resistance, distinct from both orthodox political philosophy and other forms of politics. Setting up his work in contradistinction from other prevalent forms of politics at the time, Foucault writes:

¹⁴³ For a clear overview of the general view exploring this claim against Foucault see: Duccio Trombadori’s introduction to *Michel Foucault: Remarks on Marx*. (New York: Semiotext(e), 1991), 15.

¹⁴⁴ Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Sean Hand (London: The Athlone Press, 1988), 89.

A progressive politics is a politics which recognizes the historical and specified conditions of a practice, whereas other politics recognize only ideal necessities...A progressive politics is a politics which defines, within a practice, possibilities for transformation and the play of dependencies between those transformations, whereas other politics rely upon the uniform abstraction of change.¹⁴⁵

Rather than understanding politics as the prescription of “ideal” strategies and “uniform abstractions” Foucault, as early as 1968, begins to describe a form of politics that begins with and takes into account the potential for radical transformation as its constituent component. Although the language of a “progressive” politics now appears dated (Foucault himself abandoned the notion of progression), it is clear that rather than developing an apolitical stance, Foucault instead is committed to the development of an alternative theory of the political that grounds the question of politics within the space of transformation—a concept he later develops as the phenomenon of resistance. In this way, if resistance allows for a fundamental rethinking of the “principles” which have hitherto structured the terms of the political, it is my contention that in order to understand the possibility of affirming anarchism as the horizon of contemporary radical thought, the question of resistance, must not be subordinated to the study of the history of the archipolitical. *Instead, the primacy of resistance responds to the crisis of governmentality in a way that is itself fundamental; Foucault’s historical ontologies of power derive their incredible force from the affirmation of a counter-historical ontology of resistance that is heterogeneous, yet parallel, to the history of the governmental. Yet, and consequently, in its relation of primacy to the domain of the political, resistance is not only a vital component of politics and the political, but that which makes visible the political as such.*

Thinking against Foucault’s critics, then, the primacy of resistance as articulated throughout this project can be seen, I argue, as forming the locus from which not only a new theory of politics might begin, but the very principle of intelligibility from which to rethink the domain of the political. By beginning to rethink politics through the question

¹⁴⁵ Michel Foucault, “Réponse à Une Question,” cited in David Macey, *The Lives of Foucault* (London: Hutchinson, 1993), 195.

of resistance and radical transformation, Foucault calls for a radical reanalysis of precisely what constitutes the political and the politics of resistance. As Paul Patton notes, with Foucault's intervention "one can no longer accept the conquest of power as the aim of political struggle; it is rather a question of the transformation of economy of power itself."¹⁴⁶ Recent developments in anarchist studies demonstrate a strong affinity between Foucault's work and the history of anarchism. Yet, at the same time, anarchist theorists who engage with Foucault have remained strangely mute with regard to the question of resistance. By elevating the concept of resistance as a vital philosophical problem and key concept in Foucault's lexicon, what is at stake in the attempt at rethinking the political consequent upon the turn toward anarchism today is that the primacy of resistance both designates the condition required to begin to think politics against and beyond the paradigm of government, as well as the historical force for creating new possibilities in life without government, an art of not being governed.

Chapter Outline

Chapter one, "On The Crisis of the Political: Government, Sovereignty, and the Paradigm of the Archē," takes as its critical turning point the inquiry into the reasons why the terms of the political used by political theorists presuppose an archic nexus between the paradigms of government and state sovereignty as the condition of possibility for theoretical and material conceptualization of politics. As way to establish the historical and philosophical context from which my own study proceeds this chapter traces two dominant political paradigms through Aristotle and Schmitt which, when taken together, provide a general narrative regarding the ways in which the field of the political in the West is historically elaborated in terms of a form of politics as archē—that is, the principle that locates the question of politics at the intersection between power exercised as government and the logic of state sovereignty. As I will demonstrate, it is precisely this conceptual model for the domain of the political that, until recently, has remained unchallenged by political theorists and philosophers, and as such has prevented us from

¹⁴⁶ Paul Patton, "Of Powers and Prisons," in *Michel Foucault: Power/Truth/Strategy*, ed. M. Morris and P. Patton (Sydney: Feral Publications, 1979), 143.

conceptualizing an alternative theoretical and practical framework for a theory of the political that neither assumes government or the state as the privileged site of the political. Taking the unique nexus between the principle of the archē and the paradigms of government and state sovereignty as the conceptual horizon from which to situate the turn toward anarchism in political theory, I then place anarchist theory in conversation with two recent trends in contemporary theory—postanarchism and what Critchley refers to as the “meta-political moment.”¹⁴⁷ Contrary to the history of political theory which locates the field of the political between government and state sovereignty my argument is that, in their respective responses to the crisis of the political, postanarchism and metapolitical theory both attempt to rethink the possibility of politics and the political against the logic of the archē, and yet because of this require not only a rethinking of anarchism as the basis from which a new thought of politics might emerge, but also an anarchist hypothesis of the political that takes resistance as its principal domain. Such developments in contemporary political theory not only open up unexplored possibilities for the continued retheorization of anarchism, but also, as I will argue in the chapters to follow, the critical framework to orient and situate Foucault’s theory of resistance that begs to be explored today.

Responding to the archic paradigm that synthesizes the terms of the political with government and state sovereignty, chapter two, “Anarchy and Anarchism: Rethinking the Political at the Horizon of the State and Government,” argues for a return to the study of anarchism in order to reveal a theory of the political in its irreducibility to the logic of the archē. Following what postanarchist philosopher Saul Newman refers to as the “anarchist invariant,” or, the “recurring desire for life without government that haunts the political imagination,” I examine the relevance of anarchism to contemporary political theory across two primary axes—rethinking the political against the paradigms of government and state sovereignty, and a corresponding theory of politics as resistance that animates this alternative conception of the political as such.¹⁴⁸ Here, my intention is to first reintroduce anarchism as itself a distinct form of political philosophy that

¹⁴⁷ Simon Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance* (New York: Verso, 2007), 13.

¹⁴⁸ Saul Newman, *The Politics of Postanarchism* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2010), 1.

fundamentally turns upon an alternative hypothesis of the domain of the political in its irreducibility to the political as *archē*, and second to demonstrate how the concept of resistance animates and forms the central component from which this new conception of both politics and the political can become discernible. Together these two ideas—that is, the political situated at the horizon of the state and the exercise of government, as well as the elaboration of an alternative paradigm for politics as resistance—form the locus of what I hold not only to be the essential task for political theory, but also the vital characteristics from which anarchism informs the context of Foucault’s political thought. In this regard the focus of this chapter is to both reintroduce anarchism in terms of its fundamental gesture toward developing an *anarchist hypothesis of the political*, an alternative theory of politics in which the question of resistance reveals the political in its anarchic and agonistic specificity.

Chapter three, “An Anarchist Hypothesis of the Political: Foucault, Critique and the Art of Not Being Governed,” introduces the concept of resistance as the key term that gives meaning to Foucault’s critical inquiry into the problematics of power, politics, and governmentality, and further seeks to situate Foucault’s thought as such within context of anarchism. Taking Foucault’s philosophy as exemplary of the attempt to affirm an anarchic politics situated at the horizon of the state and government, in this chapter I argue that the notion of “critique,” as developed between two key lectures Foucault gave in 1978 and 1984 under the respective titles “What is Critique?” and “What is Enlightenment?” corresponds with a different conceptualization of the terms of the political which, in turn, redefines the spacing of the political as the history wherein power always coincides with the fundamental truth of its own resistance. In this regard, it is my contention in this chapter that with the concept of “critique” Foucault not only emphasizes how the notion of resistance designates the key term central to his philosophy, but also how it designates the principle from which the political, in its agonistic specificity, can be interpreted anarchically. Taking the concept of “critique” as the hidden critical locus from which to locate the problem of resistance in Foucault’s thought, it is my contention that his work increasingly reveals what I refer to as the anarchist hypothesis of the political—in which the term ‘politics’ refers to an ongoing and permanent dimension of agonism between the exercise of government and the counter-

historical movements of resistance animated as an “art of not being governed.” Rather than beginning with the question of power (which, of course, can never be neglected in a study of Foucault) the overall goal of this chapter is two-fold: to first demonstrate how the notion of “critique” functions in Foucault as the critical concept that locates the trajectory of his works with the context of a theory of resistance, and further that Foucault’s theory of resistance rethinks the question of politics in a manner that invokes a reconsideration of the connection between his work and the history of anarchism.

Chapter four, “The Primacy of Resistance,” designates the key focal point around which my study of the intersection between Foucault and anarchism is based. Utilizing the theoretical space of the anarchist hypothesis of the political as outlined in the previous chapter, this chapter discusses Foucault’s important contribution to the often neglected questions pertaining to the relationship between politics, power and resistance. Taking the permanent interplay between power and resistance as both the constituent material and principle of intelligibility of the power and politics, I argue that Foucault’s analytic of power in *The History of Sexuality* posits what I refer to as *the primacy of resistance*, in which the question of politics is reinvigorated and made possible only insofar as resistance is to be understood as a vital, permanent characteristic of power. Central to my argument, here, is that Foucault’s fifth thesis incorporates a radical claim which reverses the essential being-political of politics, and thus has significant implications for the continual development of anarchist thought. Rather than reducing the sphere of the political to the historical operability of governmentality, through the logic of the primacy of resistance Foucault reverses the archic principle that has hitherto structured Western political thought, ultimately revealing a new way from which to reread the history of the political from the point of view of resistance rather than government. Taking seriously the notion that an alternative theory of the political—indeed an anarchist hypothesis of the political—can be made in regard to the question of resistance, what is at stake in this chapter is that such a theory ultimately first finds its basis in Foucault’s fifth thesis on power.

Chapter five, “From Archē to Agōn,” seeks to establish a theoretical continuity between the primacy of resistance as broached in *The History of Sexuality* and the lecture series given under the provocative title *Society Must Be Defended* in which the

power/resistance dynamic is directly reinvigorated by Foucault as the basic framework from which to read the question of politics and the history of the political. As its primary focal point, this chapter will focus on Foucault's genealogical analysis of the war model of politics, in which resistance is not only primary in relation to the domain of the political, but that which acts as the principle of intelligibility from which the political as such can be read. More specifically, while the previous chapter is set to reveal and explicate how Foucault's fifth thesis posits the primacy of resistance as the condition of possibility and principle of intelligibility for a new economy of power relations, this chapter traces how Foucault invokes this same thesis as the basis from which to rethink the history of the political as a domain of an *agōn* in which the power/resistance dynamic is recast in terms of interpreting politics as a continuation of war. In this regard, it is my contention that insofar as a vital connection between the analytic of power from *The History of Sexuality* and the analytic of the political as extensively theorized in *Society Must Be Defended* can be made in terms of the primacy of resistance, that this theoretical nexus is itself made possible in Foucault's strategic inversion of Carl Von Clausewitz's proposition regarding the ways in which war designates the continuation of politics by other means. By tracing the ways in which Foucault's fifth thesis is redeveloped in *Society Must Be Defended*, it is my argument in this chapter that Foucault's assertion regarding how resistance is primary and absolutely co-extensive with the field of power is indicative of an alternative hypothesis from which to interpret the political as *agōn* rather than *archē*. The central claim here is that just as resistance is primary with power for Foucault, the agonistic model of the political asserts that resistance is also primary with the history of politics.

In the final chapter, "The First Revolt: Politics as an Ethics of Resistance to Government," I outline a specific correspondence between Foucault's theory of resistance and the turn toward the study ethics at the end of his career. While the three previous chapters are set to situate Foucault's work in relation to the history of political philosophy and anarchist thought, it is my contention in this final chapter that this anarchist hypothesis of the political which takes the primacy of resistance as its constituent component, also turns upon an ethics of revolt that animates and makes possible Foucault's agonistic analytic of power and politics as such. Following Arnold

Davidson's idea that Foucault's notions of conduct and "counter conduct" as developed in *Security, Territory, Population*, contain a key "conceptual hinge" linking together the political and ethical axes of his thought, I argue that Foucault adds an explicitly ethical component to the logic of the primacy of resistance.¹⁴⁹ With the notion of counter-conduct acting as the conceptual hinge between the political and ethical periods of Foucault's thought, resistance can be seen I argue not simply in terms of an absolute refusal of government, but rather as that which in its struggle with government, affirms another possibility in life. In light of the way in which a continuity between the political and ethical axes of Foucault's thought can be drawn through the concept of resistance, it is at once my contention in this chapter that there is an explicitly political dimension of Foucault's theory of ethics that itself turns upon the question of resistance, as well as how this turn toward the study of ethics reveals an important way in which the relation between politics and resistance can be rethought in terms of a critically resistant ethos, not as a prescriptive set of moral codes and normative rules, but ethos defined as a mode of resistance to the exercise of power as government. More specifically, it is my claim that Foucault's ethical turn ought to be understood as an attempt to locate a continuity between a form of ethics that animates his theory of resistance, and a form of politics as resistance resistance—that is, an distinct ethos, or art of not being governed.

¹⁴⁹ See: Arnold Davidson, "In Praise of Counter-Conduct," *History of Human Sciences* 24: 4, (2011): 25-41.

Chapter 1

1 On The Crisis of the Political: Government, Sovereignty, and the Paradigm of the Archē

*Since its origins in Greece, politics has carried within itself a metaphysics of order. It begins from the premise that people must be governed, either democratically by themselves or hierarchically by others...If we have a politics to advance, it is the one that begins from the opposite hypothesis...There is an open battle between, on the one hand, this fear...that we can only live on condition of being governed, and on the other hand, an inhabited politics that dismisses the question of government altogether.*¹⁵⁰

--The Invisible Committee

*Perhaps there is a different way of thinking about the political principle—one that is detached from state philosophy and works against it in the name of an entirely different kind of political community. This is where the autonomy of the political translates into the politics of autonomy—a politics and an understanding of the political community which is outside of, and autonomous from, the state.*¹⁵¹

--Saul Newman

In the historical narrative that has continuously helped shape the structure and practice of Western politics, political theorists from classical antiquity to our own contemporary situation have consistently taken the dual paradigm of the exercise of power in the form of government and the coinciding problematic of sovereignty as the twin a priori presuppositions from which a critical conceptualization of politics and political philosophy might begin. To be sure, since Plato's political treatise *The Republic*—a text often considered by many theorists to be the foundational work on Western political philosophy¹⁵²—political theory has been haunted by the originary nexus that locates politics and the terms of the political in the intersections between the exercise of government and the state. Indeed, within the historical and theoretical trajectory that stretches through the foundational texts such as Plato's *The Republic* and Aristotle's *Politics*, to Thomas Hobbes's political treatise the *Leviathan*, and later Carl Schmitt's controversial work *On the Concept of the Political*, the history of political philosophy traditionally begins by presupposing an a priori nexus between the field of the political

¹⁵⁰ The Invisible Committee, "Spread Anarchy, Live Communism," in *The Anarchist Turn*, eds. Jacob Blumenfeld, Chiara Bottici, and Simon Critchley (London: Pluto Press, 2013), 230-231.

¹⁵¹ Saul Newman, *The Politics of Postanarchism*, 99.

¹⁵² See: John Ferrari, "Introduction" to Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Tom Griffith (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), xi.

and the paradigms of state sovereign power and the techniques of government. Underlying this theoretical nexus and historical continuity between the exercise of government and the paradigm of sovereignty lies what can be termed the *crisis of the political*, in which the history of politics and the political is reduced to the primacy and first principle of what the Greeks referred to as *archē*, the paradigmatic nexus that binds the question of politics and the political to the logic of government exercised within the domain of state sovereignty.

As a distinct history pertaining to the way in which the question of politics radically coincides with and is indistinguishable from the art of governing, the French insurrectionary collective, The Invisible Committee, thus indicates how western political philosophy, since its incarnation in Greece, presupposes a certain “metaphysics of order”—that is, the very question of “politics” begins with a fundamental “premise that people must be governed, either democratically by themselves or hierarchically by others.” As Robert Paul Wolff further notes in his text, *In Defense of Anarchism*, the orthodox notion of “politics” as such has traditionally been understood and elaborated within the unique paradigm of state sovereign power, wherein the term “politics” is taken to refer to the “exercise of the power of the state.”¹⁵³ Consequently, insofar as the question of politics has been traditionally elaborated in terms of the exercises of government and sovereign power, the history of “political philosophy” is therefore analogous, as Wolff writes, to the “philosophy of the state.”¹⁵⁴ Standard definitions of political theory, political science, and the term “politics” reflect this reduction of the history of the political to the dual a priori presuppositions of government and state sovereign power as the criteria proper to a critical inquiry into the question of politics.¹⁵⁵

¹⁵³ Robert Paul Wolff, *In Defense of Anarchism* (New York: Harper Publishers, 1970), 3.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 3.

¹⁵⁵ For example, see: Wilbur W. White, *White's Political Dictionary* (New York: The World Publishing Company, 1947), 220. Here, White defines “political science” as the “study of the formation, forms, and processes, of the state and government,” and “political theory” as the “study of the philosophy of the state and government, or a particular idea thereof.” Inasmuch as both political science and theory refer to the study of state and government, White therefore defines “politics” as that which at once refers to the “processes of government,” as well as the “study of governmental forms.” More recent collections of political terms and their respective definitions reveal little variations in how the term “politics” continues to be understood and used, and further reflect this general reduction of the history of politics to the dual paradigm of government and the state. See: Lain McLean and Alistair McMillan, *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Politics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 223. Here, “political science” is defined in

In its traditional and orthodox use, the most common definition of the term “politics,” is initially derived from Aristotle and refers to “the science and art of government,” or “the science dealing with the form, organization and administration of a state or a part of one, and with the regulation of its relations with other states.”¹⁵⁶ In this regard, it is my contention that the history of political theory and politics can at once be read as a history in support of the philosophy of the state, as well as in support of a distinct form of politics manifest in the continuation of the art of governing. More specifically, it is my argument in this chapter that the history of political theory can be interpreted as a historical elaboration pertaining to how politics at once emerges from Aristotle as a unique paradigm of government, a certain art of governing realized in terms of what is referred to in Greek as *oikonomia*, as well as how political theory presupposes a certain continuity between sovereign power and the concept of the political in such a way that the emergence of the field of the political (as proposed by Hobbes and later Schmitt) coincides with and is indistinguishable from the state.¹⁵⁷ While the dual paradigms of government and state sovereignty are traditionally accepted by political theorists as the key terms pertaining to the essence of politics, the originary archic nexus that locates the question of politics at the intersection of government and sovereignty is itself rarely called into question.

Taking the anarchist turn in contemporary political theory as a key referent from which to rethink the basic tenets and theoretical principles that have hitherto sustained political theory, this chapter takes as its pivotal turning point a critical inquiry into the reasons why the domain of the political in the West has assumed the dual form of government and sovereignty as the condition of possibility for a theoretical and material conceptualization of politics. Indeed, under what I hold to be the key paradigm inherent to the history of political philosophy, the exercise of government and the theory of sovereignty traditionally retain a certain originary position of primacy in regard to the

terms of the “study of the state, government, and politics,” while “politics,” at once refers to “the art and science of government,” and as “the practice of the art or science of directing and administering states.”

¹⁵⁶ Stephen D. Tansey, *Politics: The Basics* (London: Routledge, 2000), 4.

¹⁵⁷ On the translation of the term *oikonomia* see: *The Politics of Aristotle*, trans. Peter L. Phillips Simpson (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), xxxvi. As Phillips Simpson notes, the most common translation of the term *oikonomia* is “household management,” whereby the term “comes from *oikos*, meaning a household, and *nomos* (law), and gives us our word economy,” xxxvi.

founding terms that allow for the political to emerge. By position of primacy, we might highlight what the French anarchist philosopher Pierre-Joseph Proudhon refers to as the founding tripartite condition of possibility of politics in the West—that is, the elemental relation between “sovereignty, authority, [and] government”—which marks the historical condition of possibility of politics and the emergence of the political as such.¹⁵⁸ What Proudhon points toward here in terms of the conceptual triptych that has historically conditioned the ways in which we theorize and practice politics allows us to glimpse the political in its most paradigmatic form. In Proudhon’s interpretation, the terms of the political can be conceived as the history in which politics takes place in the field whose extremes are “government” and “sovereignty,” between them “authority,” *archē* in Greek. As we will see, what is at stake in the relation between government and sovereignty is the constitution of an originary nexus through which politics coincides with, and is indistinguishable from, the paradigm and first principle of an *archē*. Indeed, as the key concept through which the history of politics is expressed in the duality between government and sovereignty, the term *archē* designates the domain in which the political is revealed in its most authoritative form. It is precisely this logic of the *archē* that this study of Foucault and anarchism calls into question.

As both form of power and administration of order, as both exercise of government and state sovereignty, it is my assertion in this chapter that the original nexus that binds the question of politics to the history of the *archē* both presupposes government and sovereignty as the substance and material manifestation of politics and the political. Insofar as a critical conceptualization of the political as *archē* begins with the hypothesis that one must be governed, then the material substance and activity of politics is itself reduced to the exercise of government as a form of political power. Understood in this way, politics not only rests upon a “metaphysics of order” that presupposes the necessity of government as its own precondition, but also what The Invisible Committee refers to in terms of “government *as a specific form of power*” (original emphasis).¹⁵⁹ Indeed, as I will argue below it is in Aristotle’s seminal text, *Politics*, in which the origins and foundations of politics can be shown to be directly tied to the expression and exercise of

¹⁵⁸ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, “Resistance to the Revolution,” 482.

¹⁵⁹ The Invisible Committee, *To Our Friends*, trans. Robert Hurley (California: Semiotext(e), 2015), 68.

government as a specific form of power—that is, as an *oikonomia*. At the same time, in the transition from the political theory of classical antiquity to modern political philosophy, the question of politics is more directly elaborated as a paradigm of sovereignty in addition to the exercise of government. While the field of politics designates the exercise of power in the form of government, in the tradition that stretches from modern political theorists such as Hobbes to that of Schmitt, what is at stake for these theorists is that politics as such refers to that which is situated and takes place within the domain of the state. Consequently, however, what is ultimately revealed in both Hobbes's and Schmitt's respective models of the political is a certain equivalency between the exercise of government and the theory of sovereignty in terms of the historical agent, or motor of politics and the political as such. While the history of politics as government has a much older tradition than that of modern theories of sovereignty, it is nevertheless my contention that the two can be understood as forming a single paradigm whereby the logic of the *archē* designates the nexus through which politics is expressed and historically manifest in the field between the exercise of power as government and state sovereignty.

Even though the discourses of government and sovereignty continue to fundamentally shape the ways in which political theory is both conceived and practiced, recent developments in radical political theory, particularly the return of anarchist political theory, are beginning to rethink the possibilities of a political philosophy that can neither be reduced to the critical framework of government, nor that of sovereignty. With the crisis of the political marking the pivotal point from which to understand the critical intervention posed by the resurgence of anarchism today, it is my contention that the anarchist turn itself turns upon exploring and elucidating an alternative critical theory of the political that is fundamentally irreducible to the archic paradigm of government and sovereignty. In this regard, we might point, as does *The Invisible Committee*, toward the ways in which the contemporary political landscape is coming to be marked by an “open battle” between theorists working within the orthodox framework of government and those who begin by dismissing the “question of government altogether.” It is in relation to the latter position, that *The Invisible Committee* proposes a critical “exit from the framework of government” as the central—and even vital—task for contemporary

political theory.¹⁶⁰ If the history of political philosophy traditionally begins by presupposing an archic nexus in which politics is expressed in the field between government and sovereignty what is called for, and perhaps even required in the return to anarchism is, as *The Invisible Committee* suggests, a radically new framework from which to rethink the condition of possibility of politics and the political—that is, what is required is a critical theory of the political “that begins from an opposite hypothesis.” Similarly, as Newman further maintains in the epigraph above, if political theory is to free itself from the dual paradigms of government and the state then what is further essential is an alternative framework for “thinking about the political principle” that creates a critical caesura between the Schmittian paradigm of the “autonomy of the political” and an anarchist “politics of autonomy.”¹⁶¹

Responding to the ways in which anarchist political theory sets itself the task of rethinking the conditions, origins, and principles of legitimacy of sovereign state power, while simultaneously positing the possibility of a politics not conditioned by the history of government, the first two sections of this chapter trace two dominant paradigms of politics through Aristotle and Schmitt, in which the form of the political in the West can be revealed as a nexus between the primacy of government and sovereign power. Indeed, it is my contention that the Aristotelian and Schmittian theories of the political ought not be understood as representing two separate models, but instead that the intersections between the two represent a single paradigm of the archē in which the political designates the nexus through which politics assumes the form of an *oikonomia* exercised within the domain of state sovereignty. Taking the history of the political (via Aristotle and Schmitt) as the critical axiom upon which to situate and understand the anarchist turn in political theory, I then trace the return to anarchism across two points of intersection as framed in the continuity between the search for politics beyond the exercise of government and a rethinking of the domain of the political situated at the horizon of state sovereign power. Here I place anarchist theory in dialogue with two recent critical turns in contemporary thought—postanarchism and what Critchley refers to as the “meta-

¹⁶⁰ *The Invisible Committee*, “Spread Anarchy, Live Communism,” 230.

¹⁶¹ Saul Newman, *The Politics of Postanarchism*, 99.

political moment”¹⁶² around which the central tenets of anarchism are being mobilized in such thinkers as Jacques Rancière, Alain Badiou, Simon Critchley, Saul Newman, and Todd May in order to argue that the central concerns of their respective political theories can be characterized as the continuity between the search for a politics beyond the exercise of government and subsequently an alternative methodological and critical framework for rethinking the history of the political. Contrary to the history of political theory which assumes the primacy of government as the paradigmatic form of the political my argument is that, in their respective responses to the crisis of the political, both postanarchist and meta-political theory attempt to rethink the possibility of politics and the political against the logic of an archē. Yet, because these critical turns intervene in the history of political thought by attempting to rethink the political at the horizon of the state and the exercise of power as government, the interventions made by postanarchism and metapolitics require not only a rethinking of anarchism as the basis from which a new thought of the politics might emerge, but also an anarchist hypothesis of the political that takes resistance, rather than the exercise of government as its principal domain.

Indeed, against the background of the Aristotelian and Schmittian models of the political, what is ultimately at stake in this chapter is to demonstrate the ways in which a critical turn toward anarchism not only relies upon a fundamental rethinking of the political and politics, but also that this alternative theory of the political is itself made possible by a critical inquiry into the problematic of resistance, a key term from which the question of politics can be rethought. Such developments in contemporary political theory not only transcend the orthodox paradigms of political theory while opening unexplored possibilities for the continued retheorization of anarchism, but also the critical framework to orient and situate my critical inquiry into Foucault’s theory of resistance that begs to be explored in relation to the turn toward anarchist theory today. With this in mind, the aim of this chapter is to form the critical, theoretical, and historical context from which my own study precedes. First, by thinking through the philosophical and political problems underlying the historical terrain that reduces and structures politics to the topology and practice of government, it is my contention that what must be at stake in

¹⁶² Simon Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding*, 13.

outlining the growing relationship between contemporary radical thought and anarchism hinges on elevating an anarchist theory of the political to a more fundamental level in order to cultivate the emergence of a new political logic which forms a fundamental rift with the historical continuity of the logic of the archē. Affirming anarchist theory against the foundations of political philosophy not only seeks to expose the ontological and political principles that continue to sustain Western political practices, but also opens the space to pursue, in the chapters that follow, the implications of the emerging body of anarchist praxis and scholarship along a trajectory following a core tenet of anarchist theory found in Foucault's thought: *an anarchic politics of agonistic resistance*. Instead of reducing current debates in radical political theory to anarchism, this chapter reveals how critical turns in radical political theory such as metapolitics and postanarchism intersect with an anarchist hypothesis of the political by forging the space for the political outside of the nexus that locates politics between government and the state, and further that this anarchist turn culminates in the need for rethinking through the theory of resistance proposed throughout the works of Foucault.

1.1 The Aristotelian Paradigm of the Archē: Politics as an Exercise of Government

*Politics...is this that ordains which of the sciences should be studied in the state...since politics...legislates what we are to do and what we are to abstain from...the state seems at all events something greater and more complete whether to attain or to preserve...it is finer and more godlike to attain for it a nation or for city-states...it is political science.*¹⁶³
--Aristotle

With the exception of Plato, there is perhaps no figure within the history of political philosophy other than Aristotle who occupies such a paramount and influential place in the history of political thought. Although the wider scope of Aristotle's thought can by no means be limited to the question of politics, for many political theorists his "greatness lies in his reputation as the father of political science."¹⁶⁴ As a founding figure within the history of political theory, Aristotle's work on the question of politics, particularly in the

¹⁶³ Aristotle, *Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 936.

¹⁶⁴ Peri Roberts and Peter Sutch, *An Introduction to Political Thought* (New York: New York University Press, 2004), 48.

two texts *The Politics* and *Nichomachean Ethics*, has not only established the theoretical framework and conceptual terminology for a critical inquiry into politics and the history of the political, but also the groundwork for how politics has historically been conceived and practiced. As one Aristotelian theorist notes, since “Aristotle occupies a paramount place in the history of political ideas, not only for the range and robustness of his theories of society and the state, but also for the relevance of his theories” to contemporary political thought, any serious study pertaining to politics and the political necessarily requires (at least to a certain extent) an engagement with the works of Aristotle.¹⁶⁵ To be sure, while Aristotle’s work in political theory antedates contemporary political thought by over two-thousand years, his thought continues to exert large amounts of influence on contemporary theories of the political as characterized by his philosophical reflection on certain fundamental issues embedded in contemporary debates. “Despite the profound divide separating classical and modern theories of government,” as another commentator writes, “contemporary thinkers have, with surprising frequency, turned to the political teaching of Aristotle in order to assess both the possibilities and limitations for politics in liberal societies.”¹⁶⁶ Moreover, while there is a continued and renewed effort to place Aristotle’s political theory in dialogue with contemporary political discourse, this had led some theorists to claim that the persistent reappearance of Aristotle in contemporary debates about politics subsequently reveals the “persistence of political philosophy itself.”¹⁶⁷ If there is a certain persistence of Aristotle within contemporary studies of the political that coincides with the perseverance of political theory, this is made possible not in the way that Aristotle is continuously renewed in contemporary contexts, but rather in the way that the paradigm of government continues to fundamentally shape the various ways in which we discuss, theorize and practice politics.

For Aristotle, *politics* (*politikê* in Greek) is short for the science of the political and composes one of the three main categories of the Aristotelian sciences. Politics, like ethics, economics, and rhetoric composes the basis of what Aristotle refers to as the

¹⁶⁵ Philippe Nemo, *A History of Political Ideas from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, trans. Kenneth Casler (Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 2007), 111.

¹⁶⁶ Aristide Tessitore, “The Renaissance in Aristotelian Studies and the Persistence of Political Philosophy,” in *Aristotle and Modern Politics: The Persistence of Political Philosophy* ed. Aristide Tessitore (Indiana: University of Notre Dame Press, 2002), 2.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 7.

practical sciences (as distinct from the theoretical and productive sciences), and is clearly divided into questions pertaining at once to government, statesmanship and legislation.¹⁶⁸ While Aristotle's work in *Politics* can be read as a disinterested inquiry into the nature and substance of politics, the text can also be understood more correctly as a work organized with the general aim of instructing those in power. Thus, as one commentator affirms, "Aristotle's main purpose in the *Politics* is not to give an academically dispassionate account of political phenomena but to provide a handbook or guide for the intending statesman; 'political science' (*politikê*) is also a 'statesmanship'."¹⁶⁹ In this regard, Aristotle's *Politics* can be read alongside other works directed as advice to those in power such as Plato's *Republic* before him and later Machiavelli's *The Prince*. Yet, although the *Politics* of Aristotle can indeed be read as an instructional guide suggesting the proper methods of governing for those who already are or might eventually be in power, it is necessary to briefly return to Aristotelian political theory in order to reveal how the emergence of the category of the political and the manifestation of politics is founded upon and sutured to the paradigm of government, a specific form of power in which the term 'politics' comes to signify the techniques of government exercised within a sovereign state. While, it is incontestable that Aristotle's founding works on political theory have and continue to shape the ways in which we think and practice politics, a return to Aristotle is required not in terms of how his political works might be invoked as way to critically interrogate the possibilities afforded in contemporary liberal democracies but, more fundamentally, as a way to interrogate the ways in which the condition of possibility of politics and the emergence of the political assume the paradigmatic form of an *oikonomia*. Indeed, it is by returning to Aristotle that the concept and practice government—that is, of *oikonomia*—can ultimately be revealed as the implicit starting point for a critical inquiry into the nature of politics and the political.

In order to understand how Aristotle forms an originary nexus between the emergence of politics, the state, and the exercise of government as the constituent

¹⁶⁸ R. G. Mulgan, *Aristotle's Political Theory*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 8. Here, Mulgan maintains that the Aristotelian theoretical sciences such as metaphysics, physics, and mathematics can be distinguished from the practical sciences such as ethics and political science insofar as the aim of the latter sciences "is to determine how one ought to act."

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 8.

components of the political, it is first necessary to turn toward a seminal passage from *Nichomachean Ethics*, in which “politics” is defined as a distinct tripartite relationship between government, legislation and the state. “Politics,” Aristotle writes:

is this that ordains which of the sciences should be studied in the state...since politics...legislates what we are to do and what we are to abstain from...the state seems at all events something greater and more complete whether to attain or to preserve...it is finer and more godlike to attain for it a nation or for city-states...it is political science.¹⁷⁰

From the first sentence it is clear that the question of “politics” and the disciplinary field of “political science,” according to Aristotle, ought to be studied within the framework of a state—that is, the very question of politics is framed within the horizon of the state. As anarchist philosopher Nathan Jun notes, since Aristotle understands the state as the basis and limit of the political, his work is “politicocentric; it is always concerned with, and to a certain degree presupposes the state under some description or other.”¹⁷¹ In its most preliminary form, the terms of the political, then, in Aristotle’s thought are rendered indiscernible from its basis within the state in such a way that the state coincides with the emergence of the political. Additionally, however, while Aristotle directly situates the practice and study of politics within the domain of a state, his definition also outlines a specific synthesis between the activity of politics and the exercise of government, and further that this movement or exercise of politics becomes manifest within the art of governing, or the legislation of another’s conduct and activity. As Jun further observes, insofar as Aristotle presupposes a synthesis between the art of governing and the very activity of politics, then the manifestation of politics within the domain of the state is itself always a normative discourse legislating the activity and conduct of others; “it is concerned with how human social relations *ought* to be organized” (original emphasis).¹⁷² Politics in the Aristotelian sense, therefore refers to the practices of government which legislate the actions and potential actions of others—that is, politics as defined by Aristotle designates the exercise of government as a specific form of power, in which the

¹⁷⁰ Aristotle, *Nichomachean Ethics*, in *Basic Works of Aristotle*, ed. Richard McKeon (New York: The Modern Library, 2001), 936.

¹⁷¹ Nathan Jun, *Anarchism and Political Modernity* (New York: Continuum Books, 2012), 2.

¹⁷² *Ibid*, 2.

aim and activity of politics is to govern the field of one's conduct in order to achieve a specific end. Taken together, what is at stake in this early—indeed paradigmatic—definition of politics is a specific synthesis between politics as an exercise of government and the domain of the state—that is, politics as a distinct art of governing which legislates “what we are to do and what we are to abstain from” is framed by Aristotle within the horizon of the state. To be sure, it is with this definition that we have the earliest rendition of what designates the crisis of the political, or the archic nexus that establishes a certain continuity between the exercise of government, sovereignty and the state.

It is with these two basic premises—that is, that the domain proper to the sphere of politics is that of the state, and further that the exercise of politics is analogous to the exercise of government within the horizon of the state—through which Aristotle outlines the theoretical nexus between the domain of the political and what can be termed *primacy of government*. By the primacy of government, I mean to point toward the way in which the terms of the political, particularly in the works of Aristotle, have at once been historically reduced to the paradigm of government as the very exercise of politics, as well as the condition of possibility of the political as such. Indeed, as initially utilized by early political theorists like Plato and Aristotle the word *political* is repeatedly rendered inter-convertible with the theoretical conceptualization and material manifestation of government. Often translated as “form of government” and “constitution” from the Greek *politeia*, the word “political” designates for the ancient philosophers both a system of government and its practice.¹⁷³ Classical definitions of the political as *politeia* have had the effect of strategically locating the essence of the political within the paradigm of government, while subsequently naturalizing the exercise of government as the

¹⁷³ There is a certain difficulty regarding the precise meaning of the Greek term “*politeia*.” On the problematic nature of translating the term “*politeia*” see: Melissa Lane, introduction to Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Desmond Lee (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 383, n.3. Although Lane writes that “the precise meaning of the Greek phrase is uncertain,” she also maintains that it is often translated as “constitution,” or “government” (383). Also see: Aristotle, *The Politics of Aristotle*, trans. Ernest Barker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), ixvi. Barker prefaces his translation of Aristotle's *Politics* with an extensive outline of the critical vocabulary used by Aristotle and the inherent difficulty in translating some of the key terms used throughout his work. According to Barker, the term “*politeia*” is a derivative of the word “*polis*” and is often translated through the Latin terms “constitution” or “form of government” (ixvi). Yet, Barker also suggests that the term “*politeia*” is used by Aristotle to refer to a “way of life, or a system of social ethics, as well as a way of assigning political offices” (ixvi).

conceptual framework, or limit point, for thinking through the possibility of politics and the political. As Jun maintains in reference to Aristotle:

the very word political means having to do with forms of government... Like the axioms of Euclid's geometry, government has been an implicit starting point, always assumed and never justified—the transcendental condition of possibility for thinking, writing, and talking about human social organization.¹⁷⁴

At once meaning and referring to the sphere that has to do with forms of government, as well as its exercise as the legislation of the conduct of others, *the terms of the political and the very possibility of politics since Aristotle have been haunted by this paradigm which assumes the primacy of government as the transcendental possibility and material reality of the political as such.*

Through Aristotle, we have seen how the notion of “politics” refers to a distinct art of governing exercised within the domain of a state, and thus that the terms of the political as politeia are reducible to the primacy of government in terms of both the transcendental condition of possibility and material realization of the field of the political as such. Framing the terms of the political as a unique synthesis between the exercise of government and the state both valorizes the exercise of governing as the theoretical limit point for conceiving the political, and in doing so naturalizes the state as the horizon for the political as such. Yet, in order to fully understand how the term “politics” comes to designate the art of governing exercised within the domain of a state, what needs to be further investigated is the specific rationale Aristotle invokes as the basis from which his theory of the political emerges—that is, what is further required is a critical inquiry into the specific rationality that allows for the political to emerge as a synthesis between the exercise of government and the state. Indeed, while the horizon of the state and the exercise of government together form the nexus proper to the domain of the political, the primary goal of the *Politics* is not, however, to arbitrarily assign a fundamental relation between the exercise of government and the state but, more specifically, to outline a certain continuity between politics and a particular view of human nature whereby the latter directly informs the former and makes it possible. As Aristotle maintains in the

¹⁷⁴ Nathan Jun, *Anarchism and Political Modernity*, 1.

Physics, of all the things that exist “some exist by nature, some from other causes.”¹⁷⁵ Similarly, in the *Politics*, what Aristotle takes as his model of the political—that is the synthesis between the exercise of government and the domain of the state—can be understood as a critical elucidation of the natural condition of politics; politics according to Aristotle is that which proceeds from nature. Several theorists have engaged with the concept of “political naturalism” in Aristotle and have outlined how one of the primary goals of the *Politics* “is to derive political values from facts about human nature.”¹⁷⁶ In this regard, Aristotle’s work in the *Politics* can be understood as ultimately resting upon three fundamental presuppositions from which a certain correspondence between his view of human nature and his theory of politics can be drawn: first, human beings are, by nature, “political animals;”¹⁷⁷ second, the state exists in nature and is thus prior to the individual; and finally politics, as the art of governing, exists in nature and finds its basis in the management of the household (*oikos*). There is therefore a certain political naturalism that makes possible Aristotle’s conceptualization of politics in which the terms of the political, the state and the exercise of government are all understood to have their respective foundations within certain practices inherent in nature; politics according to Aristotle is, in fact, a natural condition of human existence. While Aristotle’s claim regarding how human beings are political by nature has informed several critical inquiries into Aristotle’s conception of the political, it is the latter two presuppositions that ultimately reveal the history of the political in its most paradigmatic form.

It is in regard to the Aristotelian conception of political naturalism in which we can fully understand how the terms of the political and the history of politics begin to coincide with the primacy of government, the state, and sovereign authority as the origins from which the practice of politics is derived. In other words, it is Aristotle’s understanding of human nature that forms the foundation of his theory of politics—that is, Aristotle’s theory of politics is inextricably linked to his understanding of human nature, and it is this particular understanding of nature through which we can trace the way

¹⁷⁵ Aristotle, *Physics*, in *The Basic Works of Aristotle*, 236.

¹⁷⁶ R. G. Mulgan, *Aristotle’s Political Theory*, 20. Here, Mulgan traces the way in which Aristotle analyzes the “polis as if it were a biological organism and tries to discover its nature by examining the pattern of its growth and development.”

¹⁷⁷ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1129.

in which the terms of the political begin to coincide with the exercise of government and the state. Aristotle begins his argument in the *Politics* by tracing how politics is in fact an inherent condition of human nature rather than an arbitrary convention, and outlines how the question of the political—in which politics designates the exercise of government within a state—therefore first finds its basis in the pre-existent models of the household and village.¹⁷⁸ Since Aristotelian political theory considers the state the final cause, or teleological end of human political association, then “the state” is to be taken according to Aristotle as itself “a creation of nature.”¹⁷⁹ Yet, while the household (*oikos*) forms the basic foundation from which the political emerges, throughout the *Politics* Aristotle presupposes the primacy and naturalization of the state as that which is prior to yet, at the same time, the natural end point of political organization. Thus, while Aristotle indeed maintains that the domain proper to the sphere of politics is the state, what underlies Book 1 of the *Politics* is a secondary thesis which attempts to ground this understanding of politics not simply within a specific conception of human nature, but rather in the state. Although the state finds its basis within and is modeled after the management of households, an organic unit which would logically appear prior to the formation of a state, Aristotle nevertheless maintains that “the state is by nature clearly prior to the family and the individual, since the whole is of necessity prior to the part.”¹⁸⁰ Aristotle’s argument here is that the state can be understood as attaining an existence prior to its constituent components in a similar way to how humans and animals are prior to the respective organs that constitute the whole of their bodies as such. However, by understanding the state as a type of social organism in which the whole precedes its constituent components, Aristotle neglects to notice, as one theorist suggests, that “human beings obviously can exist apart from the polis”—that is, by assuming that the state exists prior to its constituent components Aristotle fails to explain how or why all

¹⁷⁸ See: Barker, *The Politics of Aristotle*, xlviii. In Barker’s analysis of Aristotle’s political naturalism, a key distinction is drawn between the notions of “nature” and “convention”—that is, between “institutions existing by nature and those which existed by convention.” Against previous Greek theorists who understood the state as an artifice of “convention,” Barker demonstrates that a “polemic against” the theory and doctrine of conceiving the state as a mere ‘convention’ is “implicit in the beginning of *Politics* and recurs in the course of its argument.”

¹⁷⁹ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1129.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 1129.

humans necessarily tend toward the development of a state.¹⁸¹ At the same time, however, although Aristotle understands the state as an organic whole that exists prior to its constituent components, what he additionally fails to adequately explain is how or why the state as such is to be taken as the singular form through which the political can be expressed. If the state is not only the natural end for thinking through the concept of the political, but also that which is at once prior to its constituent components, then the Aristotelian theory of the political contains, even if only in terms of a potentiality, the primacy of the state as the very condition of possibility for a critical theory of the political as such. Although logically inconsistent, in terms of that which pertains to both the origin and end of politics, the presupposition of the state acts as the theoretical and conceptual framework required for by Aristotle to think through the very possibility of the political.

In addition to the way in which Aristotle presupposes the primacy of the state as the ultimate horizon of the political, what is further at stake in the *Politics* is that the state as such is to be understood as the authoritative expression to which all human beings collectively strive toward to attain what the Greeks referred to as *eudemonia*. Indeed, at the beginning of *Politics* Aristotle takes great care to demonstrate a certain continuity between the highest good (*eudemonia*) in which all humankind naturally strives toward and the state as the ultimate political end in which this condition of virtue can be achieved. Insofar as “man is by nature a political animal,” then the state is defined not only as the ultimate horizon in which a critical conception of the political might take place, but also as the teleological end in which a community aimed at the highest good might be achieved.¹⁸² Thus, in the opening canonical passage from *Politics*, we read that “if all communities aim at some good, the state or political community, which is the highest of all, and which embraces all the rest, aims a good in a greater degree than any other, and at the greatest good.”¹⁸³ As Barker further notes, “[w]hat makes the State natural” in Aristotle’s view “is the fact that, however it came into existence, it is as it stands the satisfaction of an immanent impulse in human nature towards moral

¹⁸¹ Fred D. Miller, Jr., “Naturalism,” in *The Cambridge History of Greek and Roman Thought*, eds. Christopher Rowe and Malcolm Schofield (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 330.

¹⁸² Aristotle, *Politics*, 1127.

¹⁸³ *Ibid*, 1127.

perfection—an immanent—impulse that derives men upwards, through various forms of society, into the final political form.”¹⁸⁴ In Aristotelian political theory, then, the state is understood as natural when it is taken as the institution toward which the whole of nature strives.¹⁸⁵ In other words, the state is justified in Aristotle insofar as it designates the horizon through which humankind might be able to achieve moral perfection—that is, because human beings have an immanent impulse toward moral perfection, the state forms the limit point in which this condition of being can be achieved through the exercise of politics.

Yet, while it has been acknowledged that Aristotle is well-known for his argument pertaining to how the state forms the ultimate horizon through which the condition of eudemonia can be achieved, it is precisely the claim that “politics is natural to man and that man’s happiness is dependent upon being a citizen of a well-run *polis* or city-state” that needs to be investigated, according to political theorists Peri Roberts and Peter Sutch.¹⁸⁶ Indeed, while Aristotle frames his argument pertaining to the naturalization of the state in terms of a perpetual striving toward human happiness and virtue through the model of the state, and justifies its existence primarily on this basis, what is ultimately overlooked or uncritically accepted by Aristotelian theorists is how Aristotle’s justification of the state simultaneously naturalizes all of the features Aristotle understands as evolving into the state, such as the master/slave relation, private property, and patriarchal family relations. If the state is understood by Aristotle as natural, this means as one commentator correctly suggests, that “[a]ll the features of its life—slavery, private property, the family—are equally justified, and also natural, when, or in so far as, they serve that sovereign end.”¹⁸⁷ Consequently, insofar as there is a specific continuity that can be drawn between Aristotle’s view of human nature and his theory of politics, what is ultimately at stake is that Aristotle presupposes from the outset the ways in which the “political relations of ruling and being ruled are among the things that develop naturally.”¹⁸⁸ Precisely because Aristotle naturalizes the state as the conceptual

¹⁸⁴ Barker, *The Politics of Aristotle*, xlix.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, l.

¹⁸⁶ Peri Roberts and Peter Sutch, “Is Politics Natural,” in *An Introduction to Political Thought*, 49.

¹⁸⁷ Barker, *The Politics of Aristotle*, l.

¹⁸⁸ Fred D. Miller, Jr., “Naturalism,” 321.

framework and horizon for thinking through the possibility of the political, the state (including the models of slavery, private property, and patriarchy) is not to be understood in Aristotelian political theory as an arbitrary form of political power, but is instead the logical consequence of human nature. To be sure, by presupposing the state as the basis and horizon of the political, Aristotle simultaneously reproduces the effects of slavery, property relations, and patriarchal rule as the basis that makes the state possible, and justifies their continuation as a consequence of human nature. In its reduction to the primacy of the state, the critical threshold of the domain of the political was never itself called into question, and the naturalization of the state since Aristotle has traditionally formed both the original structure and critical limit regarding the ways in which the political has and continues to be theorized and practiced.

While the naturalization of the state, and the view of human nature that sustains it, together form a large part of Aristotle's argument in the *Politics*, it is ultimately the critical inquiry into the paradigm and exercise of government that makes possible Aristotle's conception of politics and the political. What is further at stake for Aristotle in the classical definition of the political and politics is, then, a specific continuity between the form of government and the form of organization of the polis—where the active element defining the sphere of politics refers to the specific “arrangement of the inhabitants of a state” in order to achieve a specific end.¹⁸⁹ Neither simply government nor the social fabric of the polis, the question of politics specifically refers to the ways in which a polis is governed which, for Aristotle, begins with and takes as its model the “management of the household (oikonomia).”¹⁹⁰ Within the history of political theory, Aristotle's *Politics* not only analyzes the fundamental relationship between the household (oikos) and the state, but more specifically how the model of the household and its relationship to the state is made possible through the unique paradigm of government—that is, the concept of oikonomia is at once the foundation from which Aristotle theorizes the condition of possibility of politics, as well as the nexus that makes possible the specific continuity between the domain of the political and the domain of the state. From the Greek words *oikos* (household) and *nomos* (law), the concept of oikonomia refers to

¹⁸⁹ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1176.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid, 1130.

specific form of power as government, and the term's most common translation as the "management of a household" retains this notion of power exercised as government.¹⁹¹

Like the model of the state, Aristotle similarly maintains that the household exists in nature, and attempts to delineate a theory of politics per its foundation in the *oikos*. Consequently, however, the way in which Aristotle takes the administration of the household as the model for politics historically tends to naturalize the paradigm of government as the essence of politics, in a similar manner to the way in which the state is naturalized as the horizon of the political. Thus, insofar as "the governmental idea arises out of family practice and domestic experience," as Proudhon laments, then "there was no objection voiced, government appearing as natural to society as the subordination that obtains between the father and his children."¹⁹² In its paradigmatic form, it is this naturalization of the problematic of government, of an *oikonomia*, that acts as the locus from which to determine how the domain of the political assumes the form of a government in terms of both its structure and activity. In this way, because the political is rendered analogous to the form politics takes as an exercise of government, we can also read the very basis of Aristotle's theory of politics as simultaneously naturalizing political subjection as a necessary component of politics. Indeed, according to Aristotle the fact that "some should rule and others be ruled is a thing not only necessary, but expedient; from the hour of their birth, some are marked out for subjection, others for rule."¹⁹³ One is reminded here of Plato's famous "Foundation Myth" in Book 4 of *The Republic* in which Socrates recounts the origin of political rule, wherein some are born qualified to govern and others to be governed.¹⁹⁴ In this way, the essence of politics is not simply the exercise of governing others. Instead, rather, it is the fundamental distinction between those who govern and are governed that makes possible the theory of politics in Aristotle—that is, as a specific form of power exercised as government, what

¹⁹¹ For a general outline pertaining to the concept of *oikonomia* in Aristotelian theory, see: Peter L. Phillips Simpson, *The Politics of Aristotle*, trans. Peter L. Phillips Simpson (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1997), 8-33; and Brendan Nagle, *The Household as the Foundation of Aristotle's Polis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), 15-18.

¹⁹² Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, "The Authority Principle," 81.

¹⁹³ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1132.

¹⁹⁴ See: Plato, *The Republic*, trans. Desmond Lee. (New York: Penguin Books, 1987), 116-117.

makes a theory of politics possible as such is the distinction between those who govern and those who are governed.

By beginning with the *oikos* as the model from which politics assumes the form of government, classical political philosophy at once has had the effect of naturalizing the paradigm of government as the fundamental essence of politics, while simultaneously demonstrating that what causes the political to attain its form as such is analogous to the key distinction between those who govern and those who are to be governed. At the same time, however, the concept and model of the *oikos* is, according to Aristotle, at once the foundation from which politics assumes the form of government, as well as the basis from which this model of politics as government coincides with the domain of the state. Thus, insofar as the state in Aristotelian theory is understood as a conglomerate “made up of households” we find in the *Politics* that “before speaking of the state we must,” Aristotle claims, “speak of the management of households.”¹⁹⁵ While we have already seen that the state is prior to its constituent parts (*oikos*), what is revealed in this passage is not an inconsistency inherent to Aristotle’s political theory. Instead, what is revealed is that we must return to the model of *oikos* in order to fundamentally understand not only how the exercise of politics is manifest as a paradigm of government, but how this model of politics is what makes possible the continuity between the exercise of government and the state as the key terms of the political. Thus, while the concept of *oikonomia* refers to the management or government of a household, this same notion also designates the ways in which politics as such is exercised within the domain of the state. Etymologically, then, the term *oikonomia* at once signifies “the management of a family, but also more generally the administration, the government of a state.”¹⁹⁶ What Aristotle refers to in terms of *oikonomia* therefore designates a specific elision of borders between the *oikos* and the *polis*, the home and the state, through which the politics of the *oikos* is governmentalized within the domain of the state, and exercised as a form of political power. Two ideas are of key importance here: *oikonomia* at once designates the paradigm in which politics is exercised as a form of government and, yet, at the same time it is this paradigm of government that Aristotle invokes as the nexus that links the

¹⁹⁵ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1130.

¹⁹⁶ Brendan Nagle, *The Household as the Foundation of Aristotle’s Polis*, 16.

political to the model of the state—that is, *oikonomia* not only forms principle of intelligibility from which the question of politics is analogous to the exercise of government, but also the paradigm through which the state becomes the fundamental presupposition through which politics as government is exercised.

With the concept of *oikonomia* we can see how the foundations of political theory begin with an indissoluble nexus between the terms of the political, the exercise of government and the state. At the cusp of this nexus, the concept of *oikonomia* forms the grid from which to understand the history of the political and the exercise of politics in its most paradigmatic form. In several recent texts, the philosopher Giorgio Agamben has taken Aristotle's concept of an "*oikonomia*" as the hidden key to understanding the history of political theory and practice. In Agamben's thought, Aristotelian political theory forms the critical axis from which the history of political philosophy can be revealed in its most paradigmatic form, or the locus from which to determine the "reason why power in the West has assumed the form of *oikonomia*, that is, a government of men" (original emphasis).¹⁹⁷ Here, Agamben maintains a specific continuity between the exercise of government and the exercise of political power—that is, Agamben suggests that political power ever since Aristotle has assumed the form of an *oikonomia*, a decisive paradigm in which the history of politics and the political power of a state is exercised in the form of government. In other words, *oikonomia* designates the distinct ways in which politics and political power have become governmentalized as their original condition of possibility. Taking the paradigm of the *oikonomia* as the basic framework for defining the political within the paradigm of government, politics, therefore, in the Aristotelian sense directly refers to the practice of governing others, a practice which has its basis in and is derived from specific models of domination, hierarchy, and submission. It is in this regard that Agamben maintains that the concept and practice of "*oikonomia* may constitute a privileged laboratory for the working and articulation—both internal and external—of the governmental machine" (original emphasis).¹⁹⁸ Taking the concept of *oikonomia* as the key term around which Aristotle's

¹⁹⁷ Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For A Genealogy of Economy and Government*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa. California: Stanford University Press, 2011), xi.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid*, xi.

theory of politics is based, it is my contention that the *Politics* ought to be read as the definitive text within the history of political theory in which the terms of the political are fundamentally rendered synonymous with power exercised in the form of government within the domain of a state. Although certain theorists have taken the concept of oikonomia as the key term around which the *Politics* is based, while extensively tracing the ways in which the model of the household serves as the theoretical and material foundation from which Aristotle is able to conceive of politics, it is my contention that it is with the concept of oikonomia that we can begin to fully understand how the domain of the political radically coincides with the horizon of the state and becomes governmentalized through the logic and first principle of the archē.

Arising out of Aristotelian political thought, the origins of political philosophy begin by presupposing the concept and practices of government exercised within the domain of a state as the foundational principle from which the emergence of the political is made possible. What is perhaps equally important, however, is the synthesis Aristotle posits between the political as a form of government and the fundamental principle known to the Greeks as the *archē*. Perhaps the most pivotal word in the history of political thought, the question of the archē is at once the most foundational and the least challenged. Archē, and its plural form archai, has a wide and sometimes contradictory spectrum of meanings in early Greek culture which have led the word to be mobilized for both cosmogony and political theory. Meaning at once “beginning,” “origin,” or “first cause,” and later “sovereignty,” “dominion,” and “authority,” the term *archē* suggests both the first principle from which something proceeds and the basic foundation for authoritarian governance. Yet, in his analysis of the key concepts used by Aristotle in the *Politics*, Barker maintains a specific synthesis between the alternate meanings of the concept and further reveals a distinct way in which the term archē comes to designate the paradigmatic nexus that ultimately motivates Aristotle’s understanding of the political.¹⁹⁹ As Barker writes, the “word [archē] originally signifies ‘beginning’ or ‘initiative’; and we

¹⁹⁹ On Aristotle’s use of the term *archē*, See: Ernest Barker, introduction to *The Politics of Aristotle*, trans. Ernest Barker (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1946), lxvii. Here, Barker maintains that the term ‘archē’ is an essential concept in Aristotle’s vocabulary and conception of government. As Barker notes, the term “*archē* is the general term for rule or government, as the term *archon* is the general term for ruler, governor, or magistrate.”

may imagine that the reason it was extended, by an easy transference, to mean authority or rule was that the Greeks regarded those in authority as beginning, or starting, or initiating a course of political action.”²⁰⁰ It is in this way that the term *archē* can be understood as designating the key paradigm from which to read the question of politics in Aristotle. As we can see here while the term *archē* originally refers to “beginning” or first principle, the concept can be extended within the context of politics in order to designate the authority or rule of a government. Yet, what is ultimately at stake is that the term more correctly signifies the ways in which the Greeks regarded individuals in positions of authority—governors, rulers, or statesmen (*archon*)—as “initiating a course of political action.” In other words, *archē* designates the course through which politics emerges as a form of government—that is, *archē* for the Greeks at once refers to the principle that animates, or brings into being politics, as well as that which initiates the activity of politics as a distinct exercise of government. Indeed, within the history of political theory, the concept of an *archē* ought to be understood as the paradigmatic form through which politics and the domain of the political in the West proceeds as the exercise of government within the domain of the state.

Taking the concept of an *archē* as the paradigmatic frame of reference from which to understand Aristotelian politics in terms of the exercise of government, it is possible to demonstrate how Aristotelian political theory at once presupposes a synthesis between the primacy of government and the exercise of politics, as well as a synthesis between state and the domain of the political. Between the terms of the political and the exercise of politics as government is the paradigmatic nexus of *archē*, the radical origin from which the category of the political emerges and is manifest as a tripartite condition of government, sovereignty authority and the state. Perhaps the clearest example of an early definition of the political that begins not simply with the notion of government as its implicit beginning point, but rather in the archic nexus that binds the question of politics to the exercise of government within the domain of a state, can be found in the *Politics* when Aristotle defines the essence of the political as a unique synthesis between forms of government (*politeia*) and the first principle of authority (*archē*). Thus, in Book 3 from the *Politics*, where Aristotle seeks to define the state, and hence the domain of the

²⁰⁰ Ibid, ixvii.

political by its reference to differing typologies of political power, he also sets forth the claim that has in every way been seminal to the historical development of Western political thought. Aristotle writes: “[t]he words constitution and government (politeia) have the same meaning which is the supreme authority (archē) in states.”²⁰¹ Here, we see that the terms of the political are reducible to the paradigm of government—that is, the domain of the political and the exercise of government are defined by Aristotle in such a way that the two terms collapse into one another. At the same time, however, insofar as a zone of indistinguishability is established between the terms of the political and the paradigm of government, what is ultimately at stake in Aristotle’s definition is that this zone of indistinction reveals the logic of an archē as the hidden locus through which the political is reducible not only to the exercise of government, but the exercise of government as a specific form of power manifest in the sovereign authority of states. Insofar as the terms of the political are reducible to the manifestation and exercise of government, then what defines the essence of the political is, according to Aristotle, the way in which “government is everywhere sovereign in the state.”²⁰² What is therefore key to Aristotelian political theory is that the point of departure for a critical theory of the political presupposes an originary nexus between the domain of the political, the exercise of government, and state sovereignty in such a way that the term archē comes to designate the condition of possibility for the emergence of the political as such. In other words, what gives the political its form as an oikonomia, and makes possible its continuation as such, is the first principle of an archē, the sovereign authority that binds the terms of the political to the question of government exercised within the domain of a state. *Archē as such designates the threshold through which the domain of the political coincides with the topology of the state sovereign power and is governmentalized.*

At this juncture, it is necessary to note three characteristics of orthodox classical political theory, which form what I hold to be the key paradigm of the political that has hitherto been seminal in the historical elaboration of Western political philosophy, and which composes my point of departure in analyzing the intervention anarchism makes in the history of Western politics as such. First, the paradigm of government acts as the

²⁰¹ Aristotle, *Politics*, 1185.

²⁰² Ibid, 1184.

theoretical limit point or horizon for a critical conceptualization of the political; in Aristotelian political theory, the originary synthesis between *politeia* and *oikonomia* acts as both the conceptual framework and the transcendental condition of possibility for the terms of the political as such. Within the history of political theory, this is why Proudhon maintains that there exists a specific link between the primacy of government and the domain of the political. “Government,” Proudhon writes, is to political philosophers “the necessary and immutable *a priori*, the principle of principles, the eternal *archeus*” (original emphasis).²⁰³ Presupposing a primary synthesis between the terms of the political and the paradigm of government causes the domain of the political to have a form analogous to the form of government that makes the political possible as such. The political is not only subject to the *archē* as its dominion, but the *archē* as *oikonomia* is additionally itself the subject of politics. Political philosophy and modern theories of sovereignty arise and are derived from this dual paradigm of the *archē*.

Secondly, with the paradigm of government acting as the conceptual framework for a theory of the political, what lies at the essence of politics, and makes its activity possible, are the techniques of government exercised as a specific form of power (*oikonomia*) that legislates the actions and conducts of others. What is additionally at stake in the Aristotelian paradigm is, then, the first principle of an *archē* that grounds the essence of politics within the exercise of government and which, in turn, naturalizes political subjection, domination, and hierarchy as the essence of politics as such. As the exercise of *oikonomia*, politics designates a fundamental distinction between those who govern and those who are governed, whereby the exercise of government acts as the force that gives the political its form as such. As that which defines the structure and form of the political assumes, the question of government, as Jun maintains, should be understood not simply a political force, but also as an “ontological force, preceding and constituting the polis and not the other way around.”²⁰⁴ Finally, under the paradigm of government, orthodox political theory reduces the concept of the political to the primacy of the *archē*, in terms of both cosmological origin and teleological end, as both sovereign origin and sovereign authority, and finally as the nexus in which the political coincides with the

²⁰³ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, “Resistance to the Revolution,” 485.

²⁰⁴ Nathan Jun, *Anarchism and Political Modernity*, 1.

state and becomes governmentalized. Indeed, anarchist philosopher John Clark has importantly pointed toward the way in which the concept of archē as “origin denotes its claim to primacy and priority, in the senses of both metaphysical ultimacy and historical precedence.”²⁰⁵ What is therefore key to the Aristotelian paradigm is not that the domain of the political contains, even if only terms of a potentiality, the primacy of archic government as the very condition of possibility for a critical theory of the political as such, but more specifically how the first principle of the archē is the key concept through which the domain of the political and the history of politics assume the form of an oikonomia.

1.2 The Schmittian Paradigm: Sovereignty as a Political Paradigm of Government

*The Concept of the state presupposes the concept of the political...State and politics cannot be exterminated.*²⁰⁶

--Carl Schmitt

As discussed in the previous section, the Aristotelian paradigm of the political begins with an original presupposition, an originary archē that locates the political in the nexus between the exercise of government and the state—that is, politics in Aristotelian political theory assumes the form of an oikonomia not only in terms of the exercise of politics as archē, but also in terms of the condition of possibility of the political as such. In this way, we might read the basic subject of Aristotle’s *Politics* as a work that establishes an essential continuity between the paradigm of oikonomia and the manifestation of politics, in which the terms of the political come to designate the exercise of government within the domain of a state. While Aristotle poses a formidable nexus between politics exercised as government and state sovereignty in terms of the indistinguishable relation between politeia (form and exercise of government) and archē (supreme authority within a state), it is necessary to turn to Carl Schmitt’s text *The*

²⁰⁵ John Clark, *The Impossible Community: Realizing Communitarian Anarchism* (New York: Bloomsbury Press, 2013), 93.

²⁰⁶ Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1996), 19; 78

Concept of the Political in order to understand how the essential continuity between the logic of the archē and the terms of the political is reinvigorated as a paradigm of sovereignty. As we will see, by asserting an indivisible link between the state, politics and sovereign authority, Schmitt's central thesis regarding the "autonomy of the political" renews the Aristotelian paradigm in which the political (politeia) is understood as the supreme authority (archē) within a state. Thus, while the *Politics* of Aristotle reveals the way in which a critical conception of politics in the West assumes the form of an oikonomia, or government of men, it is necessary to return to Schmitt's work in order to fully understand how the field of the political is reduced to and radically coincides with state sovereign power. Indeed, by turning to Schmitt it is my contention that the paradigm of the archē, which in Aristotle establishes a formidable link between politics, government, and the state, reappears as a specific continuity between the terms of the political and state sovereign power in which the state becomes endowed with a monopoly on politics.

Over the past few decades there has been, as one theorist notes, "a veritable explosion of Anglo-American interest in the works of Weimar constitutional and political theorist, Carl Schmitt."²⁰⁷ Although a contentious figure in the history of political thought primarily due to his membership in the Nazi party, as well as his direct juridical support of Hitler's policies,²⁰⁸ Schmitt's work on political theory, like Aristotle, has nevertheless continuously contributed to and helped shape our understanding of modern politics and the condition of the political. Thus, in a recent work, political philosopher, Montserrat Herrero, writes that "[w]hen dealing with political theory today, reference to

²⁰⁷ John P. McCormick, *Carl Schmitt's Critique of Liberalism: Against Politics as Technology* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 1.

²⁰⁸ See: David Dyzenhaus, "Why Carl Schmitt," in *Law as Politics: Carl Schmitt's Critique of Liberalism*, ed. David Dyzenhaus (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998), 2. Here, Dyzenhaus outlines Schmitt's connection to the Nazi Party and maintains that "once the Nazis had seized power, Schmitt quickly joined the Nazi Party and devoted his considerable energies to becoming their official legal theorist." While the majority of contemporary theorists are critical of Schmitt's close ties to the Nazis, others like Chantal Mouffe have maintain that "in spite of his moral flaws, he [Schmitt] is an important political thinker whose work it would be a great mistake to dismiss merely because of his support for Hitler in 1933" (Chantal Mouffe, "Schmitt's Challenge," in *The Challenge of Carl Schmitt*, ed. Chantal Mouffe (New York: Verso, 1999), 1.

Schmitt is also required.”²⁰⁹ At the very least, Schmitt’s work has been useful for scholars and political theorists insofar as his work has provided serious studies examining the fundamental relation between the state, politics, and sovereignty as the key terms of the political. In regard to his key contributions to our understanding of modern politics, Chantal Mouffe claims that “Schmitt is one of the great political and legal theorists of this century,” a claim she continues that is “now widely recognized” by theorists on the right and left sides of the political spectrum.²¹⁰ Although, Schmitt’s theory of the political has recently been subject to severe criticism,²¹¹ his work still represents one of the more substantial attempts within the history of political theory to offer a critical conception of what can be understood as the constituent components composing the domain of the political, and continues to influence contemporary political theorists such as Mouffe.²¹² Indeed, in contemporary scholarship Mouffe’s project, perhaps more than any other, advocates for a return to Schmitt’s work in order to contest what she refers to as the “anti-political vision which refuses to acknowledge the antagonistic dimension constitutive of the political.”²¹³ Despite Schmitt’s serious critique of liberalism against which his theory of the political is based, Mouffe proposes to “think with Schmitt against Schmitt” in order to reveal a “new understanding of liberal democratic politics instead of following Schmitt in rejecting it.”²¹⁴ While Mouffe invokes Schmitt as the theoretical

²⁰⁹ Montserrat Herrero, *The Political Discourse of Carl Schmitt: A Mystic of Order* (New York: Rowman and Littlefield, 2015), 1.

²¹⁰ Chantal Mouffe, “Schmitt’s Challenge,” 1.

²¹¹ Giorgio Agamben has taken Schmitt’s political theory, particularly the issues of sovereign power and the state of exception, as a critical turning point from which to reconsider the historical and philosophical implications of the original connection between sovereign power and the political, as well as the basis for genealogical study of government. Indeed, Agamben also argues that Schmitt’s theory of the political has, over time, become the working paradigm of government in contemporary society. See: Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (California: Stanford University Press, 1998), 26-42; *State of Exception*, trans. Kevin Attell (California: Stanford University Press, 2005), 1-32; and *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa (California: Stanford University Press, 2011), 1-17.

²¹² Although Schmitt’s work would appear to better lend itself to more to political theorists who champion the state, his thought has more recently been invoked by theorists on the left as well. Post-Marxist, Chantal Mouffe has invoked Schmitt’s theory of the political as the fundamental basis for her text *On the Political*. See: Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 2. Here, in a similar move made by Schmitt, Mouffe argues that contemporary democracies face an age of depoliticization “which refuses to acknowledge the antagonistic dimension constitutive of the political” (2).

²¹³ Ibid, 2.

²¹⁴ Ibid, 14.

framework from which to rethink the question of politics within a contemporary democratic framework, her use of Schmitt can be juxtaposed against the ongoing work of Giorgio Agamben whose project takes Schmitt's theory of the political as the critical turning point from which to critique the ways in which the question of sovereign power increasingly appears as the "dominant paradigm of government in contemporary politics."²¹⁵ Indeed, alongside Agamben it is my contention that Schmitt's theory of the political offers key insight into the ways in which the history of the political coincides with the state in such a way that the very condition of possibility of politics appears as the meaning of state sovereign authority and a paradigm of government.

As Schmitt argues at the beginning of his text, despite its continual use throughout the history of political philosophy, what is lacking within political theory is a simple "clear definition of the political."²¹⁶ Reflecting upon this general problematic, Schmitt's text formulates a crucial distinction between "politics" and the "political," and the decision to title his analysis *The Concept of the Political* clearly reflects these intentions. As found in the epigraph above, what is ultimately at stake for Schmitt in *The Concept of the Political* is to retrospectively outline a theory of the political that not only attests to the permanence of the state as the key component that coincides with the emergence of the political, but also to the permanence of the state's monopolization of politics. Thus, in Schmitt we find that the intrinsic relationship between the "state and politics cannot be exterminated"—that is, Schmitt posits an essential and permanent continuity between the state and politics in such a way that the term "politics" coincides with and is monopolized within the domain of the state.²¹⁷ At the same time, however, Schmitt additionally maintains that the "concept of the state," which has a permanent relationship with the field of politics, necessarily "presupposes the concept of the political."²¹⁸ In this context, Schmitt's aim in this text is to trace the history of the basic principles which have allowed for the domain of the political to emerge as an a priori relation between state and politics, a relation that ultimately gives the field of the political its defining characteristic as a paradigm of sovereignty. Against this background, Schmitt's text is significant in the

²¹⁵ Giorgio Agamben, *The State of Exception*, 2.

²¹⁶ Carl Schmitt *On the Political*, 20.

²¹⁷ *Ibid*, 78.

²¹⁸ *Ibid*, 19.

history of political theory in that it serves as one of the first full studies inquiring into what he refers to as the essence or “nature of the political,”²¹⁹ and as such attempts to delineate the categories by which a clear definition of the political might be traced. Thus, as Schmitt claims towards the beginning of his text “a definition of the political can be obtained only by discovering and defining the specific political categories.”²²⁰

In its most preliminary form, the category that is specifically political for Schmitt is the state, and it is this conception of the political that takes the state as its principal domain that Schmitt maintains is in danger of being forgotten. Schmitt, like Aristotle before him, therefore presupposes the state as the defining characteristic and condition of possibility of the political as such. In contrast, however, to the way in which Max Weber defines the state as that which has a monopolization on legitimate violence,²²¹ what Schmitt takes as the principle component essential to the domain of the political is the sovereign state’s monopolization on what can be considered “politics.” In offering a preliminary outline of the specific categories constitutive of the political Schmitt takes, as the critical turning point for his analysis regarding the distinct nature of the political, specific concern with the ways in which certain social forces arising in the nineteenth century began to challenge the state’s monopolization of politics. Indeed, it is within the context of the perceived dissolution of the political proper that motivates the general force of Schmitt’s work. Under what are referred to as “neutralizations and depoliticizations,”²²² Schmitt argues that the key features of nineteenth century liberalism, or what he calls elsewhere “political romanticism” (i.e. the religious, cultural, economic, legal and scientific phenomena), all correspond with the antithesis of what is taken to be proper to the domain of the political.²²³ Indeed, Schmitt concisely

²¹⁹ Ibid, 19.

²²⁰ Ibid, 25.

²²¹ See: Max Weber, “Politics as Vocation,” in *Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, trans. H. H. Gerth, ed. C. Wright Mills (New York: Oxford University Press, 1946), 79.

²²² Carl Schmitt *On the Political*, 22. For more regarding the Schmittian concepts of neutralization and depoliticization also see: Carl Schmitt, “The Age of Neutralization and Depoliticization,” in *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996,) 80-96. Here, Schmitt outlines the successive historical phases of depoliticization which have had the effect of shifting the structure of the political away from its original domain contained within an absolute state.

²²³ See: Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, 23; 37. Although Schmitt draws a clear distinction between the domain of the political and the antithetical categories of liberal democracies, he additionally points toward the ways in which non-political categories can themselves become political.

summarizes the loss of a clear conceptualization of the political in the following manner: “[w]hat had been up to that point affairs of the state become thereby social matters, and, vice-versa.”²²⁴ What Schmitt is particularly concerned with, then, is that the historical entrance of liberal democracy into modern politics has had the effect of obscuring what he holds to be the substantive conceptualization of the political—that is the fundamental relation between state and politics that defines the domain of the political as such.

In contrast to the depoliticizations of the nineteenth century, what Schmitt claims is required in order to avoid losing sight of the characteristics proper to the political, are the specific set of criteria that distinguish the independence—or what is referred to as the “autonomy of the political”—from other domains.²²⁵ Proceeding from the assumption that independent domains of human social activity have their own criteria establishing their respective positions of autonomy,²²⁶ Schmitt resists providing an “exhaustive definition” of the political, instead opting for a definition in the sense of a “criterion of the political and of what it consists.”²²⁷ Insofar as the political is to be critically distinguished and taken as independent from other areas of social activity such as the realms of ethics and morality, what Schmitt refers to as the “autonomy of the political” simply means that “the political must therefore rest on its own ultimate distinctions, to which all action with a specifically political meaning can be traced.”²²⁸ If as Schmitt suggests that the criterion for a theory of morality is based off of the antithesis between good and evil, the theory of ethics off of the antithesis between right and wrong and so forth, then the critical question Schmitt invokes as the pivotal point from which his inquiry into the nature of the political is to inquire into the possible criterion required to understand the autonomy of the political. According to Schmitt, the answer to this question can be found in terms of how a “specific political distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced is that between friend and enemy,” whereby this

²²⁴ Ibid, 22.

²²⁵ Ibid, 27.

²²⁶ Ibid, 26. Here, Schmitt claims that the criteria required to distinguish between independent domains of human activity can be delineated by and reduced to “final distinctions,” or dialectic oppositions. In this way, the criterion for a theory of morality is based off of the ultimate distinction between good and evil; in ethics right and wrong, in aesthetics beautiful and ugly, etc.

²²⁷ Ibid, 26.

²²⁸ Ibid, 26.

antithesis “denotes the utmost degree of intensity of a union or separation, of an association or dissociation.”²²⁹ Here, Schmitt demonstrates that what distinguishes the domain of the political from other fields is to be found in the antithesis between forms of “association or dissociation,” whereby the nature of the political as such is defined by the “degree of intensity” between friend/enemy. It is this fundamental antithesis between friend and enemy manifest in the intensity between forms of association and dissociation, that Schmitt affirms as the antagonistic dimension constituting the domain proper to the political.

In Schmitt’s conception, the antithesis that renders discernible the defining characteristic of the political is concerned with forms of association and dissociation—that is, the formation of a collective *we* opposed to a collective *they*. Precisely because the criterion for distinguishing the political takes as its basis the existential distinction between friend and enemy, Schmitt necessarily locates a permanent dimension of antagonism inherent to the substance of the political. In other words, insofar as the political is itself made possible, according to Schmitt, by the degrees of intensity between friend and enemy, what is ultimately at stake is that the field of the political therefore culminates in a realm of permanent conflict and antagonism. For Schmitt, then, given that the criteria for distinguishing the political is based only upon the friend/enemy antithesis, the material, or “substance of the political is contained in the context of concrete antagonism” between forms of association and dissociation.²³⁰ It is with these two criteria—that is, the friend/enemy antithesis and the levels of antagonism between them—that Schmitt attempts to distinguish the categories specific to the political as such. Thus, in what appears as the most decisive statement regarding the nature of the political according to Schmitt, we read that “the political is the most intense and extreme antagonism, and every concrete antagonism, becomes the more political the closer it approaches the most extreme point, that of the friend-enemy grouping.”²³¹ So, in Schmitt’s conception, the existential distinction between friend and enemy, which thus culminates in the permanent antagonism between differing forms of associations and

²²⁹ Ibid, 26.

²³⁰ Ibid, 30.

²³¹ Ibid, 29.

dissociations, is what distinguishes the domain of the political from other domains; antagonism, according to Schmitt, is what reveals the nature of the political as a space distinguished by the permanence of both power and conflict. It is in regard to this dimension of antagonism through which Mouffe maintains that a distinction between the political and politics can be drawn in a way that reflects the basis of Schmitt's theory. Thus, in Mouffe's work, "the political" refers to the "dimension of antagonism...constitutive of human societies," while "politics" designates the "set of practices and institutions through which order is created, organizing human coexistence in the context of conflictuality provided by the political."²³² Here, while Mouffe maintains (via Schmitt) that the "political" is constituted by the permanent "dimension of antagonism" inherent within "human societies," what she refers to as "politics" nevertheless designates the techniques and practices of government "through which order is created" within the domain of the state.²³³

What is often taken for granted by theorists such as Mouffe, who read Schmitt's work as an authoritative discussion of the nature of the political, is that this concept of the political is inherently reducible to the theories of the state previously articulated in the works of earlier political theorists such as Hobbes. In this regard, immediately following the definition of the political as a concrete antithesis between the friend/enemy distinction is a third criteria which is not only absolutely crucial for understanding the very basis of Schmitt's concept of the political, but categorically decisive in highlighting the way in which Schmitt's theory radically reduces the field of the political to the question of sovereign power exercised within the domain of the state. Regarding, therefore, the third criteria required for an understanding of the domain of the political, Schmitt writes with absolute finality: "[i]n its entirety the state as an organized political entity decides for itself the friend-enemy distinction."²³⁴ It is with this third and final criteria that Schmitt posits a specific continuity between the state and the terms of the political, wherein the state acts as the foundation for the domain of the political. In this way, the very criteria—i.e. the friend-enemy antithesis and the antagonistic interplay between them—

²³² Chantal Mouffe, *On The Political*, 9.

²³³ *Ibid*, 9.

²³⁴ Carl Schmitt *On the Political*, 29-30.

required for Schmitt's model of the political are radically framed within the horizon of the state: "antithesis and antagonism" Schmitt writes "remain here within the state's domain."²³⁵ In other words, at stake in Schmitt's theory is a specific continuity between the political, the state, and ultimately sovereign power. Schmitt's conceptualization of the political here invokes the question of sovereignty as elucidated in his later work, *Political Theology*. In this text, sovereignty—which according to Schmitt is identical to domain of the political—is defined as the absolute power to make decisions based upon the state of exception.²³⁶ In this way, the political is according to Schmitt linked to the principle of state sovereignty as both its principal domain and condition of possibility—that is, the political according to Schmitt designates the field through which the friend/enemy distinction and the corresponding dimension of antagonism inherent in this antithesis coincide with the sovereign power of the state. Indeed, were this sovereign "entity to disappear, even if only potentially," Schmitt argues, "then the political itself would disappear."²³⁷ Schmitt thus forms an indivisible link between the state, politics, and sovereign power as that which is proper to the domain of the political. With this final turning point, then, Schmitt makes clear that the criterion of the political is not simply based upon the ongoing antagonism between differing friend-enemy groupings; instead, rather, the domain appropriate to the political is according to Schmitt the domain of the state—indeed, the sovereign state's monopolization of the politics of antagonism as such.

Insofar as the domain of the political cannot exist outside of a state framework, and as such, is meaningless without absolute sovereign power, Schmitt's central thesis regarding the nature of the political invokes the Aristotelian paradigm in which the political contains, even if only terms of a potentiality, the primacy of the state as the very condition of possibility for a critical theory of the political as such. Whereas in Aristotle, the logic of a *oikonomia* formed the basis from which to understand the nature of politics, in Schmitt it is the state and sovereign power that define what is proper to the structure of the political. This is why in the opening thesis of *The Concept of the Political*, Schmitt,

²³⁵ Ibid, 30.

²³⁶ See: Carl Schmitt, *Political Theology: Four Chapter on the Concept of Sovereignty*, trans. George Schwab (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 2005), 5. Here, Schmitt defines the "sovereign" in terms of "he who decides on the exception."

²³⁷ Carl Schmitt *On the Political*, 40.

like Aristotle before him, posits a decisive link between the state and the political: “the concept of the state,” Schmitt writes, “presupposes the concept of the political.”²³⁸

Beginning his investigation into the nature of the political with the assertion that the political precedes the state, it would appear that Schmitt wants to provide the basis for the appearance and continuation of the state. This is to say, that insofar as the political is taken to be primary with the state, then the concept of the political is invoked by Schmitt in order to provide the legitimate foundation for the sovereign state. On the contrary, however, the way in which Schmitt formulates a primary link between the state, sovereign power, and politics demonstrates that an analysis of the political as such can only take place by presupposing a sovereign state. In other words, what is primary within this relation is neither the political nor the criteria which distinguish the domain of the political from other domains, but the state itself, which according to Schmitt takes its model from the modern European sovereign state as it emerges in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

From both the tone of the treatise as well as the thematic focus on the forms of “depoliticizations” that effectively weaken the strength of the sovereign state, Schmitt clearly laments the loss of what he holds to be the primary relation between the sovereign state and the political. To be sure, Schmitt invokes the concept of political in order to provide a theoretical framework for returning to the model that renders the political indiscernible from the state and sovereign power as initially inaugurated by Machiavelli, Bodin, and Hobbes. Thus, in the preface to the original German edition of *The Concept of the Political*, Schmitt concisely summarizes the basic stakes of his treatise. “The decisive question” regarding the concept of the political, Schmitt argues

concerns the relationship of...state and politics...A doctrine which began to take shape in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, a doctrine inaugurated by Machiavelli, Jean Bodin, and Thomas Hobbes, endowed the state with an important monopoly: the European state became the sole subject of politics. Both

²³⁸ Ibid, 19.

state and politics were linked just as indivisible as *polis* and politics in Aristotle (original emphasis).²³⁹

While Schmitt locates the genesis of the concept of the political in the sixteenth and seventeenth century theorists of sovereignty, his allusion to Aristotle demonstrates a much larger historical trajectory. As noted earlier, the terms of the political, since Aristotle presupposed an a priori nexus between the state as the domain of the political and politics as the exercise of government. Yet, Schmitt points toward the ways in which the Aristotelian paradigm culminates in political philosophies of sovereignty whereby the state's monopolization of politics finds its ultimate expression in the concept of sovereign power. What is at stake in Schmitt's analysis of the political is not so much the criterion invoked to distinguish the political as such, but the critical foundation for understanding what the basis of the state is as a political entity. In Schmitt's model, insofar as the very criteria that distinguish the political from other domains (i.e. the permanent antagonism between the existential friend-enemy distinction) takes place within the state's domain in terms of the primary sovereign decision, then the basis of the political is rendered analogous with the basis of the state. The political, in the Schmittian model, is therefore reduced to sovereign authority and the primacy of the state, whereby it is the prerogative of the sovereign to define the content of the political.

It is in this way that we can fully understand the thesis which opens *The Concept of the Political*. If the concept of the political precedes the concept of the state, this is only made possible because Schmitt's model of the political, like Aristotle's before him, presupposes the primacy of the state as that which is prior, yet at the same time made possible by the basis of the political itself. Schmitt is thus not concerned with the origin of the state as a political entity, nor its legitimacy; the origin of the state and the coinciding legitimacy of sovereign power are both given variables in his model of the political. Schmitt's principal concern therefore lies in providing the conceptual foundation for the nexus that links together state, sovereignty, and politics, and thus makes possible the state's monopolization of politics in terms of both the antithesis between friend and enemy and the fundamental antagonism between them. For Schmitt,

²³⁹ Cited in George Schwab, introduction to Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, trans. George Schwab. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 6.

then, “the political entity is by its very nature the decisive entity, regardless of the sources from which it derives...If it exists, it is the supreme, that is, in the decisive case, the authoritative entity.”²⁴⁰ Here, Schmitt posits an immediate and primary synthesis between the domain of the political and the sovereign state (decisive entity), which insofar as it exists, begins with the “authoritative entity,” or the primacy of the *archē* that makes possible the originary nexus between the domain of the political and the state. In Schmitt’s model, the *archē* is the principle that, in establishing a specific continuity between the domain of the political and the sovereign state, renders them indiscernible.

In working through and outlining both the Aristotelian and Schmittian models of the political, my key point of departure has been to demonstrate the ways in which the history of the political, from classical to modern political thought, assumes the dual paradigm of the exercise of government and the domain of sovereignty not only as its condition of possibility, but material manifestation as well. Indeed, between Aristotle and Schmitt lies the general crisis of the political in which the synthesis between the political and *archē* coincides with and makes possible politics as the paradigm of governing and the political as the paradigm of sovereignty, both of which are to be exercised within the domain of the state. Although the Aristotelian and Schmittian models of the political appear as antinomical, these two models are not incompatible with one another, but are instead theoretically and functionally related as the two dominant paradigms which compose the general history of the political as *archē*. Beginning with Aristotle’s seminal text, we have seen how the *Politics* begins with a unique synthesis between *politeia* and *archē*, in which the domain of the political is analogous to a form of government exercised in terms of the supreme authority of a state. Aristotle therefore formulates a binding nexus between politics as *oikonomia* and sovereignty in such a way that the synthesis between the terms of the political and the paradigm of government causes the political to assume a form analogous to the state. The paradigm of government and the synthesis between *politeia* and *archē* both act as the theoretical limit point or horizon for a critical conceptualization of the political; indeed, within the history of political philosophy, the state and the consequent problematic of government have been taken as the privileged sites of politics. In a similar manner, Schmitt’s model of the

²⁴⁰ Carl Schmitt *On the Political*, 43.

political poses an indivisible link between the state, politics and sovereign power which, like Aristotle's model, paradigmatically renders the domain of the political analogous to sovereign power. Schmitt's central thesis regarding the autonomy of the political invokes the Aristotelian paradigm in that the domain of the political contains, even if only in terms of a potentiality, the primacy of the state as the very condition of possibility for a critical theory of the political as such. Rather than focusing on the question of government as the key characteristic of politics, however, Schmitt reopens the domain of the political as a field of antagonism made possible in the sovereign friend/enemy antithesis. Yet, because, Schmitt's model presupposes the state's monopolization of politics as such, the field of antagonism is itself reducible to the paradigm of sovereignty. As long as the paradigm of government and the primacy of the state together constitute the fundamental horizon of the domain of the political, the very question of politics is inherently reducible to a theory of power, and the archic nexus that connects the terms of the political to the techniques of government and sovereign power exercised within domain of the state has traditionally been left unchallenged by the majority of political philosophers.

1.3 Critical Turns Toward Anarchism: Postanarchism and Meta-Politics

*[N]otwithstanding...the seemingly insurmountable nature of the powers we confront, we are nevertheless witness to the emergence of a new paradigm of radical political thought and action...if we turn our gaze away from the empty spectacle of sovereign politics, we can glimpse an alternative and dissenting world of political life and action that can only be described as anarchistic.*²⁴¹

--Saul Newman

Against the Aristotelian and Schmittian paradigms, which have in every way been seminal in the historical development of Western political philosophy, one of the core problems contemporary radical theory is coming to grapple with is how to build a new political theory beyond the nexus that reduces the political to an originary archic nexus between government and state sovereignty. It is in this way that Agamben importantly

²⁴¹ Saul Newman. *Postanarchism*. (London, Polity Press, 2016), vii.

seeks to establish a new task and basis for political theory in such a way that it cannot reproduce the paradigms of government and sovereignty. Thus, in “Notes on Politics” Agamben maintains that if it is possible to rethink the history of political theory against its origins and current limitations, then the domain of the political “cannot still take a state-form, given that the state is nothing other than the presupposition and the representation of the being-hidden of the historical *archē*” (original emphasis).²⁴² Arguing instead that what is at stake in contemporary political thought is to rethink the political outside of the logic of the *archē*, Agamben writes that political theory “must open the field to a *nonstatal and nonjuridical* politics and human life—a politics and a life that are yet to be entirely thought” (original emphasis).²⁴³ Indeed, opening the field of political theory to a “nonstatal” form of politics that cannot be reduced to the historical paradigm of the *archē* is, perhaps, the fundamental task for contemporary critical theory, consequent upon the turn toward anarchism. As we will see, critical turns in contemporary political theory such as postanarchism and metapolitics necessarily confront the central tenets of orthodox political theory, and as such invoke and gesture toward a fundamental rethinking of anarchism as the critical basis for a radically new conception of the domain of the political.

Taking seriously the anarchist turn as a crucial intervention in both the history of critical philosophical thought and as a key referent for current debates in radical continental political philosophy, the following section situates the return of anarchism in relation to what I have referred to as the general crisis of the political in order to demonstrate that what the above critical positions demand and even require is an anarchist hypothesis of the political. Although the political theory of anarchism traditionally attempts to dislocate politics and political theory from the dual paradigms of government and sovereignty it has nevertheless failed to be accepted in the history of political philosophy as a legitimate political theory. As anarchist historian Peter Marshall notes at the end of his history of anarchist thought and practice, anarchism “cannot be called a ‘political’ theory in the accepted sense since it does not concern itself with the

²⁴² Giorgio Agamben, “Notes on Politics,” in *Means Without End: Notes on Politics*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 112.

²⁴³ *Ibid.*, 112.

state.”²⁴⁴ Given the way in which anarchism marks an unbridgeable gap with the political discourses of the state, what might be seen as the political theory of anarchism falls outside of and underpins the traditional categories and ideas that sustain orthodox political theory. Although Marshall is dismissive of considering anarchism a political theory, arguing instead that “it places the moral and economic before the political,” he nevertheless points to something fundamental in regards to the rupture anarchist theory forms with political philosophy.²⁴⁵ “If anything,” Marshall dismissively comments, anarchism “wishes to go beyond politics in the traditional sense of the art or science of government.”²⁴⁶ What Marshall attributes here as a minor characteristic of anarchist thought, not only points toward the core crisis of political philosophy, but is at the same time precisely what aligns anarchism with the task assigned by contemporary theorists to rethink the political at the horizon of the dual exercise of government and sovereignty. Anarchism neither subordinates the political to the moral, nor the economic; instead, anarchism contributes to the discourse of political philosophy by rethinking the very idea of politics against and beyond its culmination in the exercise of government. As such, anarchism begins, and is marked by, the potential of rethinking the political without the first principle of government, thus responding to the fundamental paradigm which lies at the heart of traditional political theory.

At this juncture, it is necessary to point toward certain critical positions in which anarchism is coming to change the general framework from which both politics and political philosophy are being conceived and practiced. First, consequent upon the resurgence of anarchist theory and practice, there is not only a growing interest in revisiting anarchist texts amongst philosophers, but also a way (re)reading the history of philosophy and political theory *anarchically*, and to further point out how certain theorists invoke and rely upon concepts and ideas inherent to the political theory of anarchism without necessarily acknowledging them as such. As Jun notes, the turn toward anarchism involves a new methodology of “reading anarchically”—or the “hermeneutic practice of discovering anarchist attitudes, ideas, and thoughts in literature,

²⁴⁴ Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (Oakland: PM Press, 1992), 639.

²⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 639.

²⁴⁶ *Ibid*, 639.

philosophy, and other venues.”²⁴⁷ This hermeneutic practice of reading “anarchically” has significantly helped with the development of a critical anarchist methodology with which to reread the history of philosophy and political theory from an entirely different perspective that transcends the limitations of orthodox thought. Over the past two decades, a great deal of research has been accomplished which both demonstrates previously unexplored affinities between anarchist theory and certain philosophers or schools of thought, while simultaneously helping to forge a new methodological framework required for rethinking the limitations of traditional philosophical and political theory.

In contemporary scholarship further critical work has been done with certain key figures in the history of philosophy such as Nietzsche,²⁴⁸ Bataille,²⁴⁹ Levinas,²⁵⁰ Rancière,²⁵¹ Spinoza, and Sartre²⁵² amongst others. What is at stake in these approaches is the attempt to develop “a way of thinking about anarchism as a philosophical or theoretical trope which recurs transhistorically.”²⁵³ If anarchism can be understood, at least in part, as a transhistorical and philosophical trope, then it would be a mistake to limit the history of anarchist thought and the historical anarchist movements of the late nineteenth century. By developing anarchist framework or critical methodology from which to reread the history of philosophy, recent turns toward anarchism have helped to afford new possibilities for beginning to broach the development of an anarchist theory of the political. The postanarchists in particular have been seminal in developing this critical method, and have shown how philosophers such as Foucault, Deleuze, Guattari,

²⁴⁷ Nathan Jun, “Rethinking the Anarchist Canon: History, Philosophy, and Interpretation,” *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies: Blasting the Canon*, eds. Ruth Kinna and Süreyya Evren (New York: Punctum Books, 2013), 115. Jun is well aware that not all texts can be read “anarchically.” Jun argues that two general qualifications form the rubric from which one can expand the anarchist canon past the limits of those thinkers who refer to themselves as anarchists: radical anti-authoritarianism and radical egalitarianism. Jun importantly opens up the idea of anarchism to include a wide array of thinkers whose focus and scope might help to expand the development of anarchism.

²⁴⁸ See: Lewis Call, *Postmodern Anarchism*, 31-60.

²⁴⁹ See: Duane Rousselle, *After Post-Anarchism* (California: LBC Books, 2012).

²⁵⁰ See: Simon Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance* (New York: Verso, 2007).

²⁵¹ See: Todd May, *The Political Thought of Jacques Rancière: Creating Equality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008).

²⁵² Nathan Jun discusses both Spinoza and Sartre in “Rethinking the Anarchist Canon: History, Philosophy, and Interpretation,” 92-109.

²⁵³ *Ibid*, 91.

Lyotard, Baudrillard and Derrida amongst others often invoke anarchist ideas and concepts, and as such that one can reread their works through the development of a critical anarchist framework. Although there is no general consensus amongst the thinkers who make the postanarchist canon of thought, the general claim posited by postanarchists is not that the above philosophers are nominally “anarchist.” Instead, the general intervention of postanarchism is at once to demonstrate how certain aspects of poststructuralism and other schools of philosophy help to rethink the limits of ‘classical’ anarchist thought, thus contributing to a retheorization of anarchism, or postanarchism, while simultaneously invoking anarchist theory as the critical framework from which to rethink the history of political philosophy. As Todd May argues in *The Political Philosophy of Post-Structural Anarchism*, the essential goal in theorizing the possibility of a political theory of poststructural anarchism is to “sketch the framework for an alternative political philosophy...not only in the vision it provides, but also in the style of intervention it advocates.”²⁵⁴

Another critical position suggests that the questions posed by anarchism are coming to bear upon the work of contemporary philosophers, in such a way that as David Graeber demonstrates “even those who do not consider themselves anarchists feel that they have to define themselves in relation to it, and draw on its ideas.”²⁵⁵ Faced with the limitations of more orthodox political theories, as well as the dominance of Marxist thought within the continental left, a new critical and methodological framework for thinking through the question of politics is developing which, although often unacknowledged, gestures toward a more distinctly anarchist approach to political theory and philosophy in general. One of the more recent critical trends that appears to invoke an unacknowledged anarchist basis from which to reconceive the notion of politics has been developed under what the French philosophers Jacques Rancière and Alain Badiou refer to as “meta-politics,” or what Simon Critchley later terms “anarchic meta-politics.”²⁵⁶ In the attempt to liberate political philosophy from its foundation within the

²⁵⁴ Todd May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, 3.

²⁵⁵ David Graeber, *Fragments of an Anarchist Anthropology* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2004), 2.

²⁵⁶ Simon Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance*, 92. Also see: Alain Badiou, *Metapolitics*, trans. Jason Barker (New York: Verso, 2005). Critchley borrows the idea of meta-politics from Badiou who argues that politics is always what subtracts itself from the state—that is, “politics puts the state at a distance,” 145.

dual paradigms of government and sovereignty the central thesis arising out of the metapolitical tradition is as Critchley claims that “politics should be conceived at a distance from the state.”²⁵⁷ What is at stake, then, in the attempt to rethink politics outside of the state is to recreate the space for a critical conception of politics which cannot be reduced to the paradigm of government. The principal problem, then, of contemporary radical politics, as posited within the metapolitical tradition, is how to reconceive certain conditions in which the very notion of “politics” can be situated outside and at the limit of the state. Arising out of the critical positions of postanarchism and metapolitics is a radical call to forge a new space for politics situated at the horizon of paradigm of government, and therefore to additionally ask how we can redefine the domain and terms of the political as cognizant of this turn toward anarchism.

In other words, if we can speak of a resurgence of anarchism this is because in its first instance contemporary political positions such as postanarchism and metapolitics explicitly situate themselves in relation to the task of developing an alternative hypothesis of the political outside and against the dual paradigms of government and sovereignty. The relevance of anarchism for contemporary debates in radical political theory lies in this gesture toward redefining politics as that which is situated against and beyond the state, and in turn allows the field of the political to transcend its historical limitations, while providing it with a more consistent framework. Reflected in such figures from the contemporary continental left as Alain Badiou, Simon Critchley, Jacques Rancière, Todd May, and Saul Newman is a new critical methodology that sets itself the task of undermining, displacing, and unmasking the primacy of archic power in order to rethink both politics and the terms of the political against and beyond the history of governmentality. At stake below is not simply that the central tenets of anarchism are reappearing in contemporary critical thought, but that the problems posed by anarchist philosophers anticipate current debates in critical theory, which in turn contribute to the ongoing retheorization of an anarchic politics situated at a fundamental rethinking of both the domain of the political and the essence of politics against the logic of the archē. In other words, I contend that a rethinking of the problem of the political and of political philosophy today not only requires a rethinking of the questions and interventions posed

²⁵⁷ Simon Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding*, 92.

by anarchism, but also an alternative critical methodology for reading the history of political theory anarchically.

While the postanarchist and metapolitical traditions continue to open unexplored possibilities in the affinity between philosophy, political theory, and anarchism, I want to point toward the way in which these critical positions ought to be situated in response to a growing crisis of the political. The importance, then, regarding this trajectory being carved out between the return of anarchism and the philosophical left is a critical rethinking of the fundamental premises and assumptions that allow us to rethink the rationale of the first principle the *archē*, in which politics is grounded within the techniques of government exercised within the domain of the state. Yet, what is ultimately at stake within these critical traditions is not simply that their respective interventions begin to offer a preliminary framework for an anarchist hypothesis of the political, but that this rethinking of the political itself turns upon and is made possible by a critical inquiry into the question of resistance to the exercise of government. As I will argue in the penultimate section, what these critical positions gesture towards, and even require, is the possible development of an anarchist theory of the political which turns upon the question of resistance located in the intersection between anarchism and Foucault's theory of power, politics and governmentality.

1.4 Postanarchism

*Postanarchism is not a specific form of politics; it offers no formulas or prescriptions for change. It does not have the sovereign ambition of supplanting anarchism with a newer name. On the contrary, postanarchism is a celebration and revisitation of this most heretical form of (anti)politics. Indeed, so far from anarchism being surpassed, the radical struggles for autonomy appearing today on the global terrain indicate that, on the contrary, the anarchist moment has finally arrived.*²⁵⁸

--Saul Newman

Over the past decade, postanarchism has exerted a significant amount of importance in academic circles, and has considerably helped in the resurgence of anarchist political theory. In its most basic sense, postanarchism “demonstrates a desire to blend the most promising aspects of traditional anarchist theory with the developments in post-

²⁵⁸ Saul Newman, *The Politics of Postanarchism*, 181.

structuralist and post-modern thought.”²⁵⁹ While postanarchism has been critiqued for offering a reductive and selective reading of classical anarchist thought,²⁶⁰ as well as the claim that classical anarchism “founds its politics on a flawed conception of power,”²⁶¹ it has nevertheless tremendously helped to reinvigorate interest in the study of anarchism as a distinct discipline. Saul Newman’s texts, particularly *From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power*, *The Politics of Postanarchism*, and *Postanarchism*, have been decisive in highlighting the ways in which anarchism is both coming to influence contemporary political theory, while at the same time gesturing towards a new critical understanding of the domain of the political. By identifying the appearance of anarchist themes and ideas throughout both the history of political thought and contemporary political thinkers, Newman concludes that anarchism “might be seen as the hidden referent for radical political thought today.”²⁶² For Newman, the reappearance of anarchist themes and ideas is understood as the coming framework from which to rethink the limitations of political philosophy and practice as a whole, and is thus the “eternal aspiration,” “horizon,” or “forgotten link” in which radical theory appears to culminate.²⁶³ If we can begin to speak of an anarchist turn in practice and philosophy, then what is at stake for Newman is that contemporary political philosophy and practice turn on what he refers to as the “anarchist invariant,” or, the “recurring desire for life without government that haunts the political imagination.”²⁶⁴ As a hidden, or forgotten “invariant,” what is thus of key importance in the connections currently being sketched between contemporary politico-philosophical movements and the resurgence of anarchism is that the principle tenet of anarchist theory—that the domain of the political and field of politics is irreducible to the paradigm of sovereignty and the exercise of government—once again appears at the forefront of contemporary theory.

²⁵⁹ Duane Rousselle, preface to *Post-Anarchism: A Reader* eds. Duane Rousselle and Süreyya Evren (London: Pluto Press, 2011), vii.

²⁶⁰ See: Gabriel Kuhn, “Anarchism, Postmodernity, and Postructuralism,” in *Contemporary Anarchist Studies: An Introduction to Anarchism in the Academy*, eds. Randal Amster, et al. (New York: Routledge, 2009), 20.

²⁶¹ Alan Antliff, “Anarchy, Power and Post-Structuralism,” in *Post-Anarchism: A Reader*, eds. Duane Rousselle and Süreyya Evren. (London: Pluto Press, 2011), 160.

²⁶² Saul Newman, “The Horizon of Anarchy: Anarchism and Contemporary Radical Thought,” *Theory and Event*, 13 (2010): 3.

²⁶³ Saul Newman, *The Politics of Postanarchism*, 2.

²⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 1.

With the political possibilities offered by anarchism acting as a “hidden referent” for radical theory, one of the recent tasks of contemporary scholarship has been to draw points of convergence between contemporary political theory and anarchist thought in order to lay the groundwork for rethinking the political at the limit of the paradigm of government. Like Kropotkin once suggested, what must be elevated to a more fundamental level is the demonstration of the “logical connection between modern philosophy...and anarchism.”²⁶⁵ Indeed, drawing connections between contemporary political thinkers and anarchist thought is one of Newman’s strengths as a theorist, and is what ultimately allows him to conclude that anarchist thought is reappearing today as the ultimate horizon for contemporary political thought. In the *Politics of Postanarchism*, Newman invokes contemporary political theorists such as Alain Badiou, Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Jacques Rancière, and Giorgio Agamben in order to highlight not only the anarchist tendencies of these thinkers, but that certain works in contemporary political theory gesture toward and require an alternative hypothesis of the political that cannot simply be reduced to the Aristotelian and Schmittian paradigms. At stake in Newman’s work is therefore not simply outlining the connections between anarchist thought and contemporary philosophical positions in such a way that helps supplement the critical limitations of traditional political theory; instead, rather, what is at stake for Newman is that contemporary radical political theory appears to require an investigation into anarchist political theory as the critical framework required for rethinking the political at the horizon of the state and the exercise of government.

With reference to the above theorists, Newman highlights three points of intervention in which a unacknowledged call for a return to anarchism can be staked out across contemporary philosophical debates: “a politics no longer confined to the parameters of the state, party and class.”²⁶⁶ Highlighting the ways in which the domain of the political must be rethought outside of the state, without the notion of vanguard party politics, and a break with the idea that class relations are the determining factor in political struggles, Newman’s work makes significant advances toward the preliminary

²⁶⁵ Peter Kropotkin, “Anarchism—Encyclopedia Britannica Article” in *Anarchism: A Collection of Revolutionary Writings*, ed. Roger N. Baldwin (New York: Dover Publications, 2002), 298.

²⁶⁶ Saul Newman, *The Politics of Postanarchism*, 132.

development of an alternative theory of the political that overcomes the limitations found in the Aristotelian and Schmittian paradigms. In the *Politics of Postanarchism*, Newman takes Schmitt's definition of the political as the critical axiom upon which to demonstrate how anarchist political theory posits an alternative understanding of the political that is fundamentally opposed to what I have outlined in terms of the paradigm of government that has helped to structure Western political thought and practice. In this way, Newman's work significantly takes as its basis the argument regarding how (post)anarchism "provides us with a new conception of the autonomy of the political, which transcends both the Schmittian and liberal paradigms."²⁶⁷ Against Schmitt's insistence that the appropriate domain of the political is identical with the state, Newman fundamentally reverses this logic, arguing instead that:

The state is actually the order of depoliticization: it is the structure of power that polices politics, regulating, controlling, and repressing the insurgent dimension that is proper to the political; it is a forgetting of the conflict and antagonism at the base of its own foundations.²⁶⁸

In reversing the Schmittian paradigm, Newman's point is to demonstrate that the domain appropriate to the political is not, in fact the state, but rather the "autonomous spaces defined in opposition to" the state.²⁶⁹ In its fundamental opposition to the state, anarchism begins, according to Newman, with the assertion that the "political" can be redefined as the "constitution of a space of autonomy which takes its distance from the state, and thus calls into question the very principle of state sovereignty."²⁷⁰ Understood as such anarchism defines a rupture with the historical rationale that traditionally grounds the terms of the political within the space and practice of government, and in this way forges a permanent, unsurpassable gap between the art of governing and its counter-history. In its irreducibility to the political topology of the state and governance, the significance of the postanarchist turn arises with an alternative conception of the political which, in its autonomy from the state, transcends the logic of an *oikonomia*.

²⁶⁷ Ibid, 9.

²⁶⁸ Ibid, 9.

²⁶⁹ Ibid, 9.

²⁷⁰ Ibid, 11.

Newman is correct in suggesting that the return of anarchism today provides an alternative conceptualization of the domain of the political that cannot simply be reduced to the logic of an *oikonomia*. Such an approach necessary comes into confrontation with the central tenets of orthodox political philosophy, and to a certain extent calls for a fundamental overturning of the history of political theory. What is at stake in the attempt to free the political from the nexus that binds it to an originary archic power, is that anarchism at once “conceive[s] of a space for politics outside and against the state,” as well as a coinciding form of political praxis “through which the principle of state sovereignty is radically questioned and disrupted.”²⁷¹ What is equally important, however, is the way in which Newman argues that this alternative conception of the political needs to be supplemented with a reconceptualization of politics generated by movements of resistance situated outside of the framework of state power. As Newman contends, the tendency to rethink the political at the horizon of the state is, in fact, a tendency that is “being borne out in many radical movements and forms of resistance today.”²⁷² For Newman then, what is required for a radical reconceptualization of the political that cannot be reduced to the paradigm of government is a theory of politics that takes resistance as the basis from which a new theory of the political becomes manifest. Indeed, as Newman importantly claims, it is these “movements of resistance” that make possible and “open up new political spaces, characterized by ‘anarchist’ forms of organization, which are outside of the ontological order of state sovereignty.”²⁷³

According to Newman, then, insofar as postanarchism can be seen as reappearing as the “eternal horizon” of political theory, and as such requires an alternative theory of the political that transcends the Aristotelian and Schmittian paradigms, what is further at stake is that this reconceptualization of the terms of the political itself turns upon the question of resistance. To be sure, the strength of Newman’s contributions to both the development of postanarchist theory and the history of political theory more generally arise in the attempt to rethink the basis of the political in the general context of a theory of resistance. Against the Aristotelian and Schmittian models of the political, then,

²⁷¹ Ibid, 103.

²⁷² Ibid, 106.

²⁷³ Ibid, 14.

Newman radically redefines the domain of the “political” as the “constitutive space *between* society and the state,” and further that “it is in this space that the current struggles against global capitalism and state authoritarianism must be situated” (original emphasis).²⁷⁴ In Newman’s conceptualization of the political what is ultimately presupposed is a radical dissolution of the originary nexus between the paradigm of sovereignty and the exercise of government; yet, this rupture with the logic and discourse of the archē is not a given variable for Newman, it is instead what is brought about and made possible through a critical conceptualization of resistance. In this way, by resituating the space of the political in the interstitial space “between society and the state,” what is ultimately at stake for Newman is that this reconception of the political includes two distinct ideas that turn on the question of resistance. First, Newman maintains that such a conception of the political designates how “politics must signify a disruption or break with the idea of an established order.”²⁷⁵ Second, Newman maintains that a retheorization of the political is set to emphasize how the “tasks of radical politics are not reducible to the overthrowing of state power.”²⁷⁶ In the first instance, Newman posits that resistance marks the condition from which the question of politics cannot be simply reduced to the exercise of government and state sovereignty, while in the second, the concept of resistance is invoked in relation to the history of radical political theory—that is, resistance marks the condition by which the history of struggle cannot be reduced to a revolutionary struggle over the power of the state. At stake in both these instances is that a critical theory of the political consequent upon the turn toward anarchism is made possible on condition of a vital retheorization of resistance.

Indeed, the question of resistance has been at the forefront of postanarchist political theory since its inception. In Todd May’s book, *The Politics of Poststructural Anarchism*, resistance at once forms general framework for his critical inquiry into the limitations of orthodox political theory, as well as the critical locus from which he attempts to rethink the limits of classical anarchist thought. Under what are referred to as the “twin assumptions,” or dual “*a priori* that haunts anarchist thought,” May argues that

²⁷⁴ Ibid, 169.

²⁷⁵ Ibid, 169.

²⁷⁶ Ibid, 169.

the classical anarchist “view of power as suppressive” and “their humanist naturalism” incites “the search for a transcendental or quasi-transcendental ground from which to recover a pure, untainted source of resistance” (original emphasis).²⁷⁷ This point is shared by political theorist Derry Novak who, two decades prior to May, argues that “anarchism misjudged the nature of social forces, particularly the nature and potentialities of political power,” a misjudgement from which anarchism “inevitably declined.”²⁷⁸ Rather than assuming that the ‘classical’ anarchist view of power led to its demise, May’s point, however, is more critically to demonstrate that poststructural philosophy, particularly Foucault and Deleuze’s insistence that power is not merely repressive, but productive, reveals a new critical framework from which to overcome the limits of classical anarchist thought, and thus a point of departure from which to rethink the possibility of anarchist resistance. For May, insofar as power is understood as productive rather than repressive in the Foucauldian sense, then it is the specificity of forms of power according to May that give “rise not only to that which must be resisted, but also, and more insidiously, to the forms of resistance itself often takes.”²⁷⁹ As May further concludes, “the liberation from specific forms of power must take into account of the kind of resistance that is being engaged in, on pain of repeating that which one is trying to escape.”²⁸⁰ In other words, the poststructural conceptualization of power is what allows for a reconceptualization of anarchist resistance that begins with, and arises out of, a specific analysis of power as its basis rather than pure, “untainted” point of departure.

Like May, in *From Bakunin to Lacan: Antiauthoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power* Newman takes the paradox of the uncontaminated place of resistance as the turning point from which to rethink the limits of classical anarchism consequent upon a poststructuralist conceptualization of power. According to Newman classical anarchist political theory is faced with a “theoretical impasse” which presupposes, through essentialist and universal premises, a pure place of resistance outside, rather than within power: “if there is no uncontaminated point of departure from which power can be

²⁷⁷ Todd May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, 65.

²⁷⁸ Derry Novak, “Anarchism in the History of Political Thought,” in *Anarchism as a Political Philosophy*, ed. Robert Hoffman (New York: Atherton press, 1970), 31.

²⁷⁹ Todd May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, 73.

²⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 73.

criticized or condemned, if there is no essential limit to the power one is resisting, then surely there can be no resistance against it.”²⁸¹ It is this conceptual aporia—based upon the general problematic of a theory of resistance—that composes the basis, according to Newman, for the development of postanarchist reconceptualization of politics. For Newman, then, it is “by using the poststructuralist critique” of power that “one can theorize the possibility of political resistance without essentialist guarantees: *a politics of postanarchism*” (original emphasis).²⁸² For both May and Newman, the central task of rethinking the political at the horizon of the state takes as its critical turning point the question of resistance; to be sure, resistance is the *key* concept by which a new theory of the political is made possible. Postanarchism not only highlights how resistance is a central concept inherent to anarchist political theory, but also the significance of this concept for rethinking the political in its irreducibility to the logic of the archē.

The postanarchist turn in political theory has not gone unchallenged (especially amongst anarchists), and several theorists have criticized the postanarchist understanding of classical anarchist thought, as well as the central thesis regarding how a poststructuralist intervention into anarchist thought allows for a retheorization of a non-essentialist anarchist philosophy. Alan Antliff challenges May’s “claim that ‘classical’ anarchism—and by extension, contemporary anarchism—founds its politics on a flawed conception of power and its relationship to society.”²⁸³ Against this idea Antliff argues that “classical anarchism does have a positive theory of power,” while simultaneously offering an “alternative ground for theorizing the social conditions of freedom” in a non-essentialist manner.²⁸⁴ Similarly, Nathan Jun, has challenged the central thesis of postanarchism regarding the way in which “postmodernist political philosophy represents an altogether new form of anarchism,” and argues to the contrary that “classical anarchism is arguably the first political postmodernism.”²⁸⁵ Another criticism against postanarchist can be further maintained in relation to the question of resistance as developed in anarchist political theory. Despite the ways in which May and Newman

²⁸¹ Saul Newman, *From Bakunin to Lacan: Anti-Authoritarianism and the Dislocation of Power*, 5.

²⁸² Saul Newman, *The Politics of Postanarchism*, 157.

²⁸³ Alan Antliff, “Anarchy, Power and Post-Structuralism,” 160.

²⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 165.

²⁸⁵ Nathan Jun, *Anarchism and Political Modernity*, xiii.

centralize the discourse of resistance to the project of postanarchism, it is my contention that while they both correctly point to the concept of resistance as a vital component of anarchist political theory, it is nevertheless a critical mistake to reduce the question of resistance in anarchist theory to an essential, or humanist ground that acts as the transcendental source of revolt. Despite their intentions, both May and Newman locate the place of resistance within the limits of power, and as such tend to presuppose the primacy of political power as the framework from which a critical conceptualization of resistance might take place. Regardless of its critical shortcomings, what is crucial about the postanarchist turn in contemporary radical theory is that the possibility of rethinking the political at the horizon of the state requires a more fundamental engagement with the concept of resistance. As I will demonstrate in the following chapter, the relation between anarchist political theory and resistance is not developed through a fundamental reliance on a benign human essence; instead, the question of resistance posed in anarchist theory at once redesignates politics as the struggle with the exercise of government, as well as the pivotal point from which an alternative hypothesis of the political can be found.

1.5 Metapolitics

*As far as archē is concerned, as with everything else, the conventional logic has it that there is a particular disposition to act that is exercised upon an equally determinate inferiority...for there to be politics, there must be a rupture in this logic...Politics is a specific rupture in the logic of archē.*²⁸⁶

--Jacques Rancière

In many important respects the meta-political turn, like postanarchism, represents a crucial turning point in the history of political theory consequent upon the resurgence of anarchist political theory. Beginning with the argument that a failure to transcend the nexus linking politics to the state is one of the more pressing issues political theory must come to grapple with, metapolitical theory calls for a fundamental overturning of the history of political theory. In this regard, at the beginning of his influential text, *Metapolitics*, Badiou confrontationally suggests that “one of the core demands of

²⁸⁶ Jacques Rancière, “Ten Theses on Politics,” in *Theory and Event*, 5 (2001): 306

contemporary thought is to have done with political philosophy.”²⁸⁷ For Badiou, the formidable problem of political philosophy, or what he refers to as the “great enigma of the century,” is to think through the ways in which politics ultimately gives “rise to bureaucratic submission and the cult of the state.”²⁸⁸ Political philosophy has failed, according to Badiou, to transcend the relation that binds the political to the state. To be done with political philosophy means, then, that we must begin to rethink politics in such a way that “it is impossible for it to be governed by the state,” which for Badiou and others requires a theory of “meta-politics,” or the critical conception of the space for politics outside and against the state.²⁸⁹ To be sure, consequent upon the resurgence of anarchism, one of the central tasks for contemporary radical theory is to search for an alternative space for politics outside of the framework which traditionally locates the state as the condition of possibility for the emergence of the political. At its core, meta-politics attempts to transcend the Aristotelian and Schmittian paradigms by reconceptualising politics in such a way that it cannot be reduced to either sovereignty or the exercise of government.

Perhaps the first to contribute to the development of the metapolitical moment in continental thought is the French philosopher Jacques Rancière, whose work often parallels anarchist theory, and has become increasingly integral for rethinking the history of political theory anarchically.²⁹⁰ Rancière’s principal text in political theory, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, and the coinciding supplementary essay “Ten Theses on Politics,” both provide a new conception of politics that significantly aids in the possibility of critically dislocating the state’s monopolization on politics within the art of governing and sovereign law. In *Disagreement*, Rancière asserts a fundamental distinction between what he refers to as “archipolitics” and “metapolitics” in order to fundamentally rethink the basis upon which political theory traditionally presupposes the

²⁸⁷ Alain Badiou, *Metapolitics*, 10.

²⁸⁸ Ibid. 70.

²⁸⁹ Ibid, 87.

²⁹⁰ On the parallels between Rancière and anarchism see: Todd May, *The Political Thought of Jacques Rancière: Creating Equality* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2008), 82-100; and “Anarchism from Foucault to Rancière,” in *Contemporary Anarchist Studies: An Introductory Anthology of Anarchy in the Academy*, ed. Randall Amster (London: Routledge, 2009), 11-17.

paradigm of government as the condition of possibility of politics.²⁹¹ It is with this distinction that Rancière provides a preliminary passageway toward rethinking the political anarchically. The paradigm of classical politics—which I have suggested begins with an originary nexus between *politeia* and *archē*—is according to Rancière the fundamental myth, or originary “lie that invents some kind of social nature in order to provide the community with an *archē*” (original emphasis).²⁹² Insofar as traditional political theory presupposes an originary link between the very notion of politics and the paradigm of government, Rancière proposes to rename this history under the heading of “archipolitics,” or the political “project of a community based on the complete realization of the *archē* of community.”²⁹³ What Rancière nominates under the heading of “archipolitics” is useful in identifying a paradigm of political theory in which the very condition of possibility of politics always becomes manifest within the logic of an *archē*, and as such presupposes an originary link in which the domain of the political assumes the form of government. It is in this way that the orthodox history of political philosophy has, according to Rancière, been none other than the history of the *archipolitical*.

By pointing out that the historical terms of the political are conditioned by the crisis of the *archē*, thus culminating in the problematic of archipolitical government, what is at stake for Rancière is to demonstrate the ways in which the traditional conceptualization of politics has effectively been reduced to theories and relations of power. Because politics in its traditional conceptualization arises out of the presupposition of an *archē* as its principal domain, and therefore culminates in the logic of government, the very history of archipolitics becomes manifest in what Rancière renames in terms of the logic of the *police*. Archipolitics as such is, according to Rancière, “just as much a form of archipolicing that grants ways of being and ways of

²⁹¹ Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, trans. Julie Rose (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1999, 61-93).

²⁹² *Ibid*, 16, original italics. Here by the “lie that invents some kind of social nature” as the basic condition for politics, Rancière has in mind the “foundation myth” from the *Republic*, in which Plato sets forth the claim that some people by nature of their birth are fit to govern while others are born to be governed. According to Rancière, it is this fundamental myth which has historically reduced politics to the paradigm of government.

²⁹³ *Ibid*, 60.

doing.”²⁹⁴ In this regard, Rancière describes the relation between archipolitics and the logic of the police in the following manner:

Politics is generally seen as the set of procedures whereby the aggregation and consent of collectivities is achieved, the organization of powers, the distribution of places and roles, and the system for legitimizing this distribution. I propose to give this system of distribution and legitimization another name. I propose to call it *the police* (original emphasis).²⁹⁵

By “the police,” a term invoked with reference to Foucault’s studies of the biopolitical and governmental policing of populations in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, Rancière means to describe the ways in which the paradigm of government forms the framework for the domain of the political.²⁹⁶ What Rancière identifies here as the logic of the police directly invokes Aristotle’s *oikonomia*, or the way in which the domain of the political traditionally assumes the primacy of government as its condition of possibility. Politics takes on the logic of the police for Rancière because it is an ordering “of bodies that defines the allocation of ways of doing, ways of being, and ways of saying”²⁹⁷—in short, politics as archipolitics is for Rancière none other than the exercise of power as the art of governing. “To put it simply,” Rancière concludes, “the *politeia* of the philosophers is the exact identity of politics and the police” (original emphasis).²⁹⁸ Insofar as political philosophy attempts locate the possibility of politics within the paradigm of government then, as Rancière suggests, it “is condemned to have to re-identify politics and police.”²⁹⁹ Archipolitics as such points toward the core crisis of political philosophy that renders politics indistinguishable from the exercise of government. Indeed, according to Rancière the specific continuity established between politics and power exercised as government ultimately amounts to a radical “reduction of

²⁹⁴ Ibid, 68.

²⁹⁵ Ibid, 28.

²⁹⁶ Ibid, 28. With reference to Foucault, Rancière draws a direct connection between what he refers to as the logic of the police and the paradigm of government. Rancière writes: “Michel Foucault has shown that, as a mode of government, the police described by the writers of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries covered everything relating to “man” and his “happiness.”

²⁹⁷ Ibid, 29.

²⁹⁸ Ibid, 4.

²⁹⁹ Ibid, 9.

the political to the state” in the sense of both the Aristotelian and Schmittian paradigms.³⁰⁰

Yet, what is at stake for Rancière is that the very gesture that grounds the political within the realization of an *archē* “cancel[s] out politics through the gesture that founds it.”³⁰¹ Indeed, if the political cannot be reduced to the single foundation of an archipolitics, then what is crucial is the way in which Rancière both reserves and reopens a space for politics outside of its culmination in the logic of an originary *archē*. Unlike the postanarchist critique of locating a pure space for politics outside of the state, the ‘outside’ that forms the substance of politics is not, for Rancière, made possible by an essential foundation, but an entirely different logic that dislocates the state’s monopolization on politics. The key critical aspect of metapolitical theory thus begins with and turns upon the idea that politics is irreducible to the exercise of power, and as such must be understood on its own terms. At the same time, however, this means that what is required for Rancière is an entirely different logic for politics, a specific rationale antinomical to the art of governing.

Taking Rancière’s first thesis on politics from his seminal essay, “Ten Theses on Politics,” as a beginning focal point from which to understand this key distinction, we can directly point toward the ways in which an alternative conceptual and methodological approach to the question of the politics is developing that directly challenges and undermines the traditional categories that sustain orthodox political theories. In the opening component of his first thesis on politics, Rancière writes with absolute certainty that “[p]olitics is not the exercise of power.”³⁰² This is a bold claim, and one that is clearly directed at the history of traditional political theory as outlined in the first sections of this chapter. If the activity composing politics, as Rancière posits here, cannot be reduced to the exercise of power then what is at stake in this thesis is foremost the claim seeking to overturn the core tenets of political theory from Plato, Aristotle, Hobbes and Schmitt. In its irreducibility to the exercise of government, traditional political theory has, both conceptually and practically, remained none other than a philosophy of power

³⁰⁰ Ibid, 1.

³⁰¹ Ibid, 9.

³⁰² Ibid, 303.

and the coinciding theoretical investigation into the origins and legitimacy of power as such. For Rancière, then, rendering “politics with the exercise of, and struggle to possess, power is to do away with politics.”³⁰³ Contrary to Schmitt’s insistence that the appropriate domain of the politics is the state, from Rancière’s perspective the state is more correctly the site of depoliticization—that is, it is the locus of sovereign power that polices the domain of politics as the exercise of government. In this way, if the history of political philosophy could more correctly be referred to, as Rancière argues here, in terms of a historical theory of power, then what might still be considered political philosophy necessarily requires an entirely different framework for a critical understanding of the very possibility of politics. Indeed, in the second component of his first thesis on politics, we read that “[p]olitics ought to be defined on its own terms.”³⁰⁴ Defining the notion of politics on terms that are irreducible to the politics of the state opens up new possibilities for developing alternative approaches to political theory distinct from theories of sovereign power, and therefore outside the history of archipolitics.

Insofar as the possession of and struggle toward power is to be understood as analytically different in kind than the proper domain of politics, what is therefore required for political theory is a conceptual framework which begins with a fundamental redefinition of what “politics” in its non-statist form consists of as such. In Rancière’s thought, the proper character of what is to be considered the essence of politics cannot, as we have seen, be reduced to the exercise of power. Indeed, politics as distinct from archipolitics, is that which escapes in the Schmittian sense those with the sovereign power to define what is proper to the domain of politics, as well as its manifestation in the exercise of power as government. Instead, rather, turning to Rancière’s seventh thesis on politics we find that the essence of politics lies in its opposition to the paradigm of government and logic of policing: “politics,” Rancière writes, “is specifically opposed to the police.”³⁰⁵ In its irreducibility to the exercise of power, politics is that which disturbs power in order to bring about what Rancière refers to as the “impossibility of the archē.”³⁰⁶ In its irreducibility to the struggle for and possession of power, what is proper

³⁰³ Ibid, 303.

³⁰⁴ Ibid, 303.

³⁰⁵ Ibid, 309.

³⁰⁶ Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, 13.

to the domain of politics is the space of autonomy that lies in opposition to the state; politics is that which confronts the logic and manifestation of the archē. Distinct from archipolitics, Rancière therefore “propose[s] to reserve the term *politics* for an extremely determined activity antagonistic to policing” (original italics).³⁰⁷ In this conception, the appropriate domain of politics is neither the state, nor the fundamental field of antagonism between the friend/enemy distinction as posited in Schmitt’s model, but the sphere of agonism defined in opposition to the state and the logic of the police exercised as government. As that which actively opposes the police, Rancière’s reconceptualization of “politics” retains the sense of antagonism as found in Schmitt’s model. Yet, precisely because this antagonism is directed against the state the critical conceptualization of politics found in Rancière’s thought is defined by and begins with a framework that is more consistently aligned not only with anarchism, but with an anarchist conception of politics as resistance. With this alternative framework in place, the turn toward metapolitical theory can be understood as an attempt to liberate political philosophy from its foundation within the space of government and sovereign law in order to create an alternative space for a politics in which the techniques of governmentality are both questioned and disrupted.

Arising out of Rancière’s political thought is a need for a fundamental rethinking of new forms of politics that can be situated outside of the terrain that reduces the political to the archipolitical. This is to say, a reconceptualization of alternative possibilities for the political which can neither be reduced nor assimilated to the archipolitical, requires a different political topology which, in its radical dislocation from the archipolitical, attempts to open the space for political practice beyond the horizon of state-based politics. It is in this context, that Rancière posits the possibility of a transition from archipolitics to metapolitics. For Rancière, metapolitics defines a radical space which, although outside of, comes into conflict with the archipolitical through the manifestation of “dissensus.”³⁰⁸ The key concept of dissensus in Rancière’s thought resists the reduction of the political to the archipolitical; dissensus points toward the essence of politics because it designates a radical sphere of praxis in which the primary

³⁰⁷ Ibid, 29.

³⁰⁸ Ibid, 95-121.

locus of politics arises in the insurgent form of agonism against archipolitical policing. Rancière's conceptualization of politics as the realm of ongoing conflict and agonism radically reverses Schmitt's central claim regarding how the political is marked by the sphere of antagonism exercised within the state. What can be understood as politics for Rancière, however, is neither the object nor objective of the state, but a distinct form of praxis that disrupts and *resists* the archipolitical. Thus, Rancière's third thesis on politics reads: "politics is a specific rupture in the logic of the archē."³⁰⁹ Working within an alternative framework for understanding the domain of the political that resists the logic of archipolitics, Rancière locates a real political and philosophical possibility; as the activity by which politics defines a rupture with the "logic of the archē," the praxis and substance of politics is not only interpreted anarchically, but anarchic by definition.

Contrary, then, to the Aristotelian and Schmittian paradigms, in Rancière's understanding politics is what becomes manifest in direct opposition to the state, and therefore reverses the very principle of state sovereignty. Whereas in Aristotle and Schmitt, politics directly refers to and takes place within the domain of the primacy of government, for Rancière, the domain proper to the sphere of politics might better be characterized—although he does use this language—by *resistance to the archipolitical*. Against the rationale of the first principle of an ontological and authoritarian force that grounds politics in the problem of government and legitimates this act as the terms of the political, what is crucial regarding Rancière's work, is how he importantly helps to reformulate the question of politics from the perspective of resistance rather than the paradigm of government. It is by further elaborating this conceptual nexus between the locus of politics and the praxis of resistance that we can begin to rethink the history of politics in terms of carving out a distinct "rupture with the logic of the archē" in a more consistent manner.

There are clear parallels that can be drawn between the metapolitical moment and the political theory of anarchism, especially in terms of rethinking politics from a different critical logic than the logic of the archē. Anarchist political theory traditionally begins by providing a different way for thinking about the terms of the political—one that both defines a rupture with the logic of the archipolitical and situates politics outside and

³⁰⁹ Jacques, Rancière, "Ten Theses on Politics," 309.

against the state. Indeed, it is this search for a place for politics situated at the horizon of the state that incites the search for a ground from which the politics of resistance might be found. Thus, if as Badiou and Critchley suggest that the goal of contemporary political thought is to rethink politics meta-politically—that is, as a form of politics that “puts the state at a distance”³¹⁰—anarchism can be seen as providing a more consistent framework from which to situate and understand the implications of the meta-political moment. Critchley is thus correct to assert both that this “meta-political moment is *anarchic*” (original emphasis), and again, like Rancière, that “politics is the manifestation of dissensus, the cultivation of an anarchic multiplicity that calls into question the authority and legitimacy of the state.”³¹¹ Crucially, however, Critchley’s reconceptualization of a theory of politics that “puts the state at a distance” places, as its conceptual and practical framework, the question of resistance as the very basis from which a new theory of politics might begin.³¹² It is in this regard that Critchley importantly maintains that this politics as “[r]esistance is about the articulation of a distance, the creation of space or spaces of distance from the state.”³¹³

The strength of Critchley’s work arises in the way in which he locates the concept of resistance as the central concept that composes the retheorization of politics as proposed by Rancière. At the same time, Critchley’s conceptualization of an anarchic politics of resistance that, in its very activity, creates spaces outside of the state, additionally makes possible the search for a non-essentialist “outside” to power as theorized by the postanarchists. The creation of spaces outside the state are what Critchley refers to as “interstitial distance[s].”³¹⁴ As Critchley argues in a separate work,

³¹⁰ Alain Badiou, *Metapolitics*, 145. Critchley reiterates this idea and claims that the metapolitical moment requires a retheorization of politics “conceived at a distance from the state,” (*Infinitely Demanding*, 12).

³¹¹ Simon Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding*, 13.

³¹² To be sure, the concept of resistance often forms the basic subject matter of Critchley’s work. As reflected in the title, his work regarding how the question of meta-politics can be elaborated at the intersection of anarchist political theory and Levinasian ethics, *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance*, Critchley argues that what is required is a reconceptualization of politics that locates resistance as its key component. Additionally, in the *Faith of the Faithless: Experiments in Political Theology*, Critchley tracks “what has shifted in the aesthetic and political practices of resistance and how the latter has begun to mobilize around” new concepts and practices (12).

³¹³ Simon Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding*, 148.

³¹⁴ *Ibid*, 13.

“these interstices are not given or existent,” but made by the very activity of politics.³¹⁵ If the creation of the distance from the state is what is produced by politics, then Critchley’s understanding of politics affirms the postanarchist search for a non-essentialist outside to power that can act as the ‘ground’ for resistance. Yet, at the same time this “outside” is not an essential place of resistance that comes from the outside, but is instead, somewhat paradoxically, forged from within the state. In this way, “the activity of politics” is, according to Critchley, “working within the state against the state...the forging of a common front, imagining and enacting a new social bond that opens a space of resistance and opposition to government.”³¹⁶ The distinction Critchley makes is crucial. If the active component of politics finds its locus and logical expression in the concept of resistance instead of the state or the art of governing, Critchley’s understanding of politics demonstrates that resistance is what forges the outside of the state by its very activity as such. Such an approach does not posit a pure outside to power, but instead demonstrates that a radical exteriority is made possible by resistance. In the chapters that follow it is my contention that the theoretical nexus in which the question of politics is inextricably linked to the question of resistance must be rigorously thought through to its fullest extent.

1.6 Conclusion: Toward a Critical Theory of Anarchism

This chapter addressed and took as its critical turning point the ways in which the domain of the political in the West often assumes a form of government as its historic condition of possibility. The paradigm of government, and the synthesis between *politeia* and *archē* acts as the theoretical limit point or horizon for a critical conceptualization of the political. Indeed, within the history of political philosophy, the state and the consequent problematic of government have been taken as the privileged site of the political. Taking the Aristotelian and Schmittian paradigms as historical examples of this I have shown that the terms of the political begin with a unique synthesis between *politeia* and *archē*, in which the domain of the political is analogous to the exercise of government within a

³¹⁵ Simon Critchley, *The Faith of the Faithless: Experiments in Political Theology* (New York: Verso, 2012), 233

³¹⁶ *Ibid*, 233.

sovereign state. Presupposing a primary synthesis between the terms of the political and the paradigm of government causes the domain of the political to have a form analogous to the form of government that makes the political possible as such. As long as primacy of the state and paradigm of government constitute the fundamental horizon of the domain of the political, the very problem of the political has been reduced to the paradigm of government, and the archic structure that connects the domain of the political to the domain of the state has traditionally been taken for granted, and unfortunately unchallenged by the majority of political philosophers.

Taking the Aristotelian and Schmittian paradigms as the critical turning point from which to locate the return of anarchist political theory, I then situated the resurgence of anarchist political theory through the postanarchist and meta-political turns in contemporary theory in order to demonstrate that contemporary political theory appears to demand an alternative hypothesis of the political located at the horizon of the state. At the same time, however, while critical turns such as postanarchism and metapolitics help to contribute to the resurgence of anarchist political theory by asserting the autonomy of the political from the state and redefining politics in terms of a radical struggle with the state, what is further required is the unique question of resistance that has always been posed by the logic of anarchism. What is crucial in the turn toward anarchism is therefore not only the formation of politics beyond the framework of the state, but a form of politics that is centred on, and arises out of a critical inquiry into the general problematic of resistance. It is nevertheless my contention that the tradition of anarchist theory has always affirmed the critical moves made in postanarchist and metapolitical theory, and therefore that what is required is itself a return to the study of anarchism in which the question of resistance can be shown in its specificity.

As I will maintain in the following chapter, the key intervention made by anarchist political theory in its most basic form, ought to be understood against the background of the crisis of the political. Rather than reducing anarchism philosophically as a simple rejection of the state counter-posed with a utopic view of a desirable future, or to a radical “rejection of politics,”³¹⁷ anarchist political theory begins by positing an

³¹⁷ George Woodcock, “The Rejection of Politics,” in *Anarchism and Anarchists: Essays by George Woodcock* (Winnipeg: Quarry Press, 1992), 78-87.

entirely different theory of the political that begins with a critical exiting from the paradigm of government. One of the ways, then, in which to understand the recent turn toward anarchism is, as Dimitri Roussopoulos argues, that a rethinking of anarchist political theory affords “new horizons...for a transformative political philosophy that promotes” innovative political possibilities “without a centralizing authority, that is a state...without a fixation on a nation state.”³¹⁸ In light of this possibility, the following chapter addresses the way in which a rethinking of anarchism affords us a way of thinking through alternative political possibilities by presupposing a radical dissolution with the nexus that confines the political to the paradigm of government. In doing so, the overall goal is to demonstrate the ways in which anarchist philosophy posits an alternative hypothesis of the political which, as we will see, itself turns upon the question of resistance to the exercise of government rather than the archic nexus between government and sovereignty as a way to rethink the possibility of a non-statist politics. Anarchism intervenes in the history of political philosophy by rethinking the fundamental categories that ground the political within the paradigm of government, while at the same time resituating the concept and practice of resistance as the vital condition that makes possible an alternative theory of the political.

With the paradigm of government acting as the critical turning point from which to understand the turn toward anarchism as such, the following chapter is therefore devoted to further exploring the implications of developing an alternative hypothesis of the political through an engagement with anarchist political theory. More specifically, in the next chapter I revisit anarchism in order to make a case for a reading of the history of anarchist thought as turning upon a vital distinction between the exercise of government and the politics of resistance, in which a critical theory of resistance comes to designate the specificity of the political as such. Although anarchism is often reduced to, as political theorist A.J. Simmons suggests, a single “central claim [that] unites all forms of anarchist political philosophy”—that is, the claim that “all existing states are illegitimate,”³¹⁹ I maintain that reducing anarchism to the claim that there can be no

³¹⁸ Dimitri Roussopoulos, “The Politics of Neo-Anarchism,” in *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas, Vol. 3: The New Anarchism (1974-2012)*, ed. Robert Graham (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2013), 31.

³¹⁹ A.J. Simmons, *Political Philosophy* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 23.

legitimate states is itself historically inaccurate and fails to take into consideration several other characteristics distinct to anarchist theory. While the anarchist critique of the state does indeed mark a central point of contention within the tradition of anarchist thought, it is my contention that the locus of anarchist critique is, more fundamentally, directed at the nexus that binds the domain of the political to the dual paradigms of the exercise of government and sovereign power as outlined in this chapter. Furthermore, by reducing anarchism to an abstract critique of the state, traditional political philosophers often neglect and fail to take into account the ways in which anarchist political theory fundamentally turns upon an alternative theory of “politics,” whereby the term itself designates for anarchists, not solely the exercise of government, but the counter-movements of resistance against the deployment of government as such. By rethinking anarchism in terms of elaborating an alternative hypothesis of the political through a critical theory of resistance, my general intentions are twofold: to first define, or perhaps redefine, anarchism qua the unique concept of resistance, while simultaneously invoking the concept of resistance the principle from which to read the history of the political. Such a critical conception of anarchism designates the critical framework from which to situate Foucault’s theory of resistance amongst this tradition in the chapters that follow.

Chapter 2

2 Anarchy and Anarchism: Rethinking the Political at the Horizon of the State and the Exercise of Government

*Government is stationary... Governments always stand for the “established order of things.” Hence, we use the word anarchy, the negative of government, and will retain it when the political state has merged into the social commonwealth.*³²⁰

--Lucy Parsons

*Anarchism is the method by which to achieve anarchy through freedom and without government, that is without authoritarian organisms which, by using force, even, possibly for good ends, impose their will on others.*³²¹

--Errico Malatesta

*Anarchism can be described first and foremost as a visceral revolt. The anarchist is above all...in revolt.*³²²

--Daniel Guérin

By way of establishing the general problematic and theoretical framework from which my own study proceeds, the previous chapter outlined and addressed the ways in which the domain of the political traditionally presupposes the paradigms of government and sovereignty as the transcendental and material condition of possibility of politics as such. Tracing this nexus between the exercise of government and the theory of sovereignty as the fundamental conceptual impasse posed within the history of political theory, the goal of the previous chapter was two-fold. To first demonstrate—through a reading of Aristotle and Schmitt—two dominant paradigms within the history of political philosophy in which the historical condition of possibility of the political is conditioned by the principle of an *archē* that forms the nexus between politics exercised as *oikonomia* and state sovereign power. Furthermore, while outlining the preliminary intersections between the return of anarchism and the critical positions of both postanarchist and metapolitical theory, the second aim of the previous chapter was to demonstrate that there is a strong current in contemporary thought to fundamentally rethink the philosophical

³²⁰ Lucy Parsons, “Anarchy: The Negative of Government,” in *Freedom, Equality, and Solidarity: Writings and Speeches, 1878-1937*, ed. Gale Ahrens (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr Publishing, 2004), 115.

³²¹ Errico Malatesta, *Life and Ideas*, ed. V. Richards (London: Freedom Press, 1965), 19-20.

³²² Daniel Guérin, *Anarchism: From Theory to Practice* (New York: New York University Press, 1970), 8.

and political problems underlying the historical terrain that reduces and structures the terms of the political to the techniques of government exercised within the domain of the state. Rather than working within the historical framework that reduces the question of politics to the exercise of government and the domain of the political to the advent of state sovereign power, contemporary critical positions such as postanarchism and metapolitics demand the invention of new political topologies outside this very nexus, and thus fundamentally gesture toward the preliminary development of what can be referred to as an *anarchist hypothesis of the political*, an alternative theory of the political that begins anarchically, and reopens the space of the political as a topology of agonistic struggle instead of a sovereign art of government.

What is ultimately at stake in staging a decisive juxtaposition between the orthodox tradition of political philosophy and the critical interventions posed by postanarchism and metapolitical theory is how these latter two positions adopt the basic tenets of anarchism as the key referent from which the history of the political can be rethought, thus carving out a distinct space for the revitalization of anarchist political theory in contemporary scholarship. We have seen that the central claim arising out of both postanarchism and the metapolitical theory is that the domain of the political is irreducible to the exercise of government, or what Rancière aptly refers to as the “archipolitical.”³²³ Because the politics is irreducible to the logic of the archē, the political as such for Rancière begins anarchically. Furthermore, within the postanarchist tradition we have seen how Newman reverses Schmitt’s paradigm pertaining to the continuity between the domain of the political and state sovereignty. Contrary to Schmitt’s argument regarding how state sovereignty forms the substance proper to the domain of the political, Newman instead maintains that the state is itself an “order of depoliticization”—that is, state sovereignty is the “structure of power that polices politics, regulating, controlling, and repressing the insurgent dimension that is proper to the political; it is a forgetting of the conflict and antagonism at the base of its own foundations.”³²⁴ The critical question, then, central to postanarchist and metapolitical theory revolves around how to create a rupture with the political logic grounded in the

³²³ See: Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*, 61-93.

³²⁴ Saul Newman, *The Politics of Postanarchism*, 9.

archic nexus between state sovereignty and the exercise of power as government. In turn, this requires an alternative hypothesis for the political that at once reveals what Newman refers to as the agonistic “insurgent dimension proper to the political,” and what Rancière refers to as the form of “politics” that carves out a “specific rupture in the logic of the *archē*” (original emphasis).³²⁵ By situating the question of politics and the political at the horizon of the state and the exercise of government, postanarchist and metapolitical theory both affirm what can be preliminarily referred to as the anarchic terms of the political, in which what is ultimately presupposed is not the primacy of the first principle of government, but a critical caesura between the political as *archē* and the “insurgent dimension” of the political manifest in terms of a distinct rupture with the logic, discourses, practices of politics as *archē*.

In both postanarchist and metapolitical theory, however, the preliminary development of this alternative hypothesis of the political requires, and is paired with, the task of locating as Newman, Badiou, and Critchley all claim a radical new space for forms of “politics situated at a distance from the state,”³²⁶ or reserving the terms “politics,” as does Rancière, to designate an “extremely determined activity antagonistic to policing.”³²⁷ Thus, while there is a strong current amongst the above theorists to rethink the terms of the political as an insurrectionary rupture with the logic of the *archē*, what is at stake is how these theorists reintroduce the concept of historical struggle—that is, of resistance—as the very condition from which the basic tenets of political theory can be retheorized. Rather than presupposing, as does Aristotle, that politics designates the techniques of government exercised within the domain of the state, we see here that politics can, in fact, be rethought at once as that which is located “at a distance from the state,” as well as the field of agonistic struggle “antagonistic to policing”—that is, as *resistance to the techniques of government exercised as a specific form of power*. As that which is located and takes place outside of the logic of the *archē*, a critical theory of “politics” for these theorists is fundamentally revitalized, elaborated, and posed in regard to a critical inquiry into the question of resistance as the very locus that makes possible

³²⁵ Jacques Rancière, “Ten Theses on Politics,” 306.

³²⁶ See: Saul Newman, *The Politics of Postanarchism*, 4; Simon Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding*, 111-114; Alain Badiou, *Metapolitics*, 145.

³²⁷ Jacques Rancière, *Disagreement*, 29.

an alternative space for politics located at a “distance from the state.” Crucially, then, while the continuation of anarchist thought reappears with particular force in terms of developing an alternative hypothesis of the political, what is ultimately at stake in this retheorization is the reappearance of the critical question of resistance, a new paradigm from which the basic tenets of political theory can be rethought. Indeed, as I will argue throughout this chapter, the concept of resistance is not only the central (and perhaps even vital) component that has always remained at the very heart of anarchist political theory since its incarnation, but the key concept by which the political and the question of politics is reopened as a fundamental agonistic space of struggle—that is, it is through the unique question of resistance that anarchist political theory is able to posit an altogether different theory of the political.

In this way, while metapolitical theory appears to invoke anarchist thought as the basic turning point from which to rethink the logic and structure of the political, and although postanarchism invokes poststructural political philosophy as a way to overcome the alleged limits of “classical anarchism,” it is my assertion that the political theory of anarchism both affirms and prefigures the major critical moves established and articulated in these schools of thought.³²⁸ In other words, anarchist political theory, I maintain, has historically set the terms of debate that make possible the metapolitical and postanarchist interventions. In this regard, these critical positions ought to be understood as designating a historical continuation of the vital attempt initially posed by anarchist theorists to rethink the field of the political and the subsequent question of politics on condition of the unique place of the permanence of resistance amongst the field to which politics refers and consists. Since its origins, anarchist political theory has presupposed a radical dissolution with the statist imagery of orthodox political philosophy, and in this way prefigures the political possibilities offered through the more recent critical trends of postanarchism and metapolitics. Thus, if the intersections between contemporary political theory and anarchist thought can be maintained, as Saul Newman suggests, in terms of a permanent (albeit at times hidden) “invariant”³²⁹ of political theory in which the history of government is simultaneously haunted by the possibility of life without

³²⁸ See: Todd May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, 65; 87.

³²⁹ Saul Newman, *The Politics of Postanarchism*, 1.

government, it is my contention in this chapter not only that the resurgence of anarchism requires the development of a radically alternative hypothesis of the political, but more fundamentally that this critical task itself requires a return to the study of the question of resistance as posed in anarchist theory.

With this critical framework in mind, what is ultimately at stake in this chapter is two-fold: to first reintroduce anarchism as itself a distinct form of political philosophy that fundamentally turns upon an alternative hypothesis the political irreducible to the logic of the *archē*, and second to demonstrate how the concept of resistance animates and forms the central component from which this new conception of both politics and the political can become discernible. Together these two ideas—that is, the political situated at the horizon of the state and the exercise of government, as well as the elaboration of alternative paradigm for politics as resistance—form the locus of what I hold to be the essential task for political theory. In this regard, the focus of this chapter is to both reintroduce anarchism as a more consistent theoretical framework from which to rethink the political anarchically, as well as how this theory of the political turns upon an agonistic theory of resistance as the key component that reveals the political as such. Whereas the political concept of “anarchy,” as well as a politics of resistance have both been traditionally excluded and discounted within the history of political theory, the overarching goal of this chapter is to reintroduce the political theory of anarchism as that which asserts an alternative hypothesis of the political through a critical theory of resistance. To do so, the concept of “anarchy” will be elaborated in three distinct yet interrelated manners that might act as the preliminary framework from which to rethink the political on condition of resistance: as a philosophical principle that affirms an alternative starting point for a critical theory of the political; as a historico-political principle in which the history of the political is retheorized as a permanent domain of agonistic struggle; and as a paradigm of politics as resistance. In this regard, this chapter aims to define, or perhaps even redefine anarchism, at once as a critical political theory that attempts to identify within the history of politics an alternative set of criteria from which the domain of the political cannot be reduced to a priori paradigm of government, as well as how anarchist thought turns upon and is critically coupled with the affirmation

of a unique theory of resistance as the vital principle from which to read the history of the political in radically new ways.

2.1 Drawing the Line Once Again: Anarchism and Marxism on the Concept of Struggle

*[T]he situation in politics can be defined as a breakdown of the state and its entire failure...the collapse of states will become more than a question of time, and the most peaceful of philosophers will see in the distance the dawning light by which the great revolution manifests itself.*³³⁰

--Peter Kropotkin

*The novelty of the coming politics is that it will no longer be a struggle for the conquest or control of the State, but a struggle between the state and the non-State (humanity), an insurmountable disjunction between whatever singularity and the State organization.*³³¹

--Giorgio Agamben

In the trajectory that stretches from the anarchist Peter Kropotkin who, over a century ago, defined the “situation in politics” as a “breakdown of states,” to contemporary philosopher Giorgio Agamben’s claim pertaining to the ways in which “novelty of the coming politics” can be defined in terms of an “insurmountable disjunction,” or fundamental “struggle between the State and non-State,” we can underline the ways in which anarchism reappears as the horizon from which politics and the political might be rethought as a paradigm of historical “struggle,” or what I will elaborate hereafter as a distinct form of *politics as resistance*. With this problematic in mind, it is my contention that what must be at stake in outlining the growing relationship between contemporary radical thought and anarchism hinges on elevating an anarchist theory of the political to a more fundamental level in order to cultivate the emergence of a alternative political logic in which the “insurmountable disjunction” between a conception of the political as archē and an alternative theory of the political redefined in terms of an agonistic struggle “between the State and Non-state.” At stake, then, in what Agamben refers to as the

³³⁰ Peter Kropotkin, “The Breakdown of the State,” in *Words of a Rebel*, trans. George Woodcock (New York: Black Rose Books, 1992), 24; 28.

³³¹ Giorgio Agamben, *The Coming Community*, trans. Michael Hardt (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), 85.

“novelty of the coming politics” is a return to rethinking the questions of the political and politics within the paradigm of historical struggle. This turn toward a more anarchist approach to a theory of the political, as well as the retheorization of politics as resistance has not been without its various critics. More specifically, a large portion of the criticisms directed at the return of anarchism are most commonly set forth by contemporary Marxist theorists. This is, of course, nothing new. Ever since the dispute between the Marxist-communists and the anarchists that led to a divisive split in the fifth congress of the International Workingmen’s Association in 1872 over questions pertaining to the revolutionary use of in Bakunin’s words, “a state, a government, [and] a universal dictatorship”³³² in order to achieve one’s political goals, a firm line pertaining to their respective theories of historical struggle has been drawn between the two most radical traditions in the history of political philosophy. Indeed, what Agamben alludes to as the novel forms of politics to come fundamentally appears to echo the historical divide pertaining to how the concept of struggle has been conceptualized in the revolutionary traditions of both anarchism and Marxism. As a struggle neither for the “conquest or control of the state,” but that which is situated between the “state and non-state,” Agamben appears to reference the fundamental debate between anarchism and Marxism over the critical use of how the concept of struggle is to be conceived and practiced. What is at stake in the divide between anarchist and Marxist thought is not, therefore, a set of fundamental ideological differences, but a contestation over the paradigm of historical struggle and its use within the field of politics—that is, the fundamental break between anarchism and Marxism arises in regard to their respective conceptions pertaining to a historical theory of struggle, or resistance. While the confrontation between anarchism and Marxism has been well documented by historians, the dispute between Marx and Bakunin is useful in pinpointing a fundamental confrontation between two dominant theories of historical struggle within the revolutionary tradition.³³³ Indeed,

³³² Mikhail Bakunin, “The Excommunication of The Hague,” in *No Gods, No Masters: An Anthology of Anarchism*, ed. Daniel Guérin, trans. Paul Sharkey (California: AK Press, 2005), 189.

³³³ For example, see: James Joll, “Bakunin and the Great Schism” in *The Anarchists* (London: Eyre and Spottiswoode, 1964), 84-114; George Woodcock, *Anarchism and Anarchists* (Canada: Quarry Press, 1992), 171-173; and Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (California: PM Press, 2010), 280-283. For an outline of the key differences between Marx and Bakunin that ultimately led to their separation see: Paul Avrich, *Anarchist Portraits* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1988), 5-15.

it is by tracing the preliminary distinctions between these two theories of struggle that an anarchist hypothesis of the political can be shown to be simultaneously paired with historical theory of resistance that ultimately motivates this conception of the political as such.

Following his expulsion, alongside James Guillaume and other anarchists, from the First International, the Russian insurrectionary anarchist, Mikhail Bakunin, argued that an unbridgeable gulf had been forged between the authoritarian communisms inspired by Marxist doctrine and the anti-authoritarian tendency of anarchism. This pivotal schism between Marxism and anarchism not only helped to define a new direction for nineteenth and early twentieth century radical thought, but also brought to the forefront of the modern political imagination an alternative critical social philosophy which, at its very core, questions the fundamentally authoritarian premises of Western political thought and practice. Accordingly Bakunin clarifies that between these two nascent tendencies in radical thought, there is a “very palpable difference...a yawning gulf.”³³⁴ Marxists, Bakunin concludes, are “governmentals and we are anarchists.”³³⁵ In regard to the question of historical struggle, Bakunin reveals that Marxism is to be distinguished from anarchism since its theory of resistance remains, in fact, bound to the fundamental presuppositions of modern Western political thought insofar as it understands the state as the transcendental and material condition of possibility for overcoming capitalism. Despite their attempts at a revolutionary theory of class struggle as the principle component of history as such, Bakunin maintains that Marxists nevertheless “worship the power of the state,” thus reinvigorating the logic of the archē endemic within the entire tradition of political philosophy.³³⁶ As Bakunin’s dissention demonstrates, although orthodox Marxism attempts a critical conceptualization of the politics of struggle, this theory of struggle fundamentally relies on the very condition it opposes. Marxist-communists, Bakunin laments, can therefore “acknowledge no other

For Bakunin’s own writings on his fundamental difference with Marx, and Marxist in general, see: “The Excommunication of The Hague,” and an excerpt from *Statism and Anarchy* both collected in *No Gods No Masters: An Anthology of Anarchism*, ed. Daniel Guérin (California: AK Press, 2005), 189-194 and 194-197 respectively.

³³⁴ Mikhail Bakunin, “The Excommunication of The Hague,” 191.

³³⁵ Ibid, 191.

³³⁶ Ibid, 191.

emancipation than the one they expect from their so-called people's State."³³⁷ The implications of Bakunin's critique of Marxism are far-reaching; insofar as Marxism traditionally presupposes the use of the state as a means toward a proletariat revolution, the notion of class struggle as a dominant theory of resistance is revealed by Bakunin as itself a statist project. Bakunin is clear, however, that an anarchist theory of resistance is that which can only take place "independently of any government tutelage."³³⁸ It is within the fundamental thesis that a politics of struggle must take place independent of the framework of government that forms the basis of the anti-authoritarian ethics that distinguishes anarchism from other political traditions. At the heart of this fundamental chasm between Marxism and anarchism lies a basic distinction that has at once become central to the elaboration of the anti-authoritarian ethics distinct to anarchist thought, and the resurgence of anarchism consequent upon what May refers as the "failure of Marxism."³³⁹ The advent of anarchism, as a distinct political theory, is not simply based off of an a priori rejection of authoritarian modes of political organization, but more fundamentally that this rejection is coupled with and informs the notion that both politics as well as critical theory of historical resistance *must be conceived independent of the principle of government, and further that the paradigm of struggle as such cannot take place either within the framework of a state or as a struggle for control of the state.*

Today, in both theory and practice, the vital distinction between the anarchist and Marxist conceptualizations of historical struggle is once again reappearing.³⁴⁰ To be sure, contemporary Marxist-communist philosophers such as Alain Badiou and Slavoj Žižek are in many ways at the locus of this debate. Although metapolitical theory can be seen as sharing and advancing a certain affinity with anarchism—particularly in its central assertion regarding the autonomy of the political from the state as well as gesturing toward an alternative theory of politics as struggle—it is precisely around the questions

³³⁷ Ibid, 191. For further examples pertaining to the anarchist thesis that historical struggle ought to take place outside of both the state and government see the chapters titled "Representative Government" and "Revolutionary Government" from Peter Kropotkin, *Words of a Rebel*, trans. George Woodcock (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1992), 118-144 and 165-177, respectively.

³³⁸ Mikhail Bakunin, "The Excommunication of The Hague," 189.

³³⁹ See: Todd May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, 17-45.

³⁴⁰ See: chapter three "An Infantile Disorder: Anarchism and Marxism" and chapter four "The Horizon of Anarchy: Radical Politics in the Wake of Marx" from Saul Newman's *The Politics of Postanarchism*, 74-102 and 103-137, respectively.

pertaining to both anarchism and the politics of resistance that Badiou and others have problematized in relation to recent developments in radical political philosophy. Given, as Badiou states in *Metapolitics*, that the central question—or “great enigma of the century”—in which contemporary political philosophy must grapple takes the forms of asking “why does the subsumption of politics...ultimately give rise to bureaucratic submission and the cult of the State?,” it is easy to locate an anarchist dimension of Badiou’s political thought, particularly in regard to the way in which he attempts to rethink political theory against the “cult of the state.”³⁴¹ Yet, whereas Newman argues that Badiou’s thought draws “upon a certain kind of anarchism without acknowledging it,”³⁴² Badiou nevertheless maintains that his theory of a “politics without a party” ought not be reduced to the critical framework of anarchism.³⁴³ Thus, in *The Communist Hypothesis* Badiou writes:

We know today that all emancipatory politics must put an end to the model of the party, or of multiple parties, in order to affirm a politics ‘without a party’ and yet at the same time without lapsing into the figure of anarchism which has never been anything else than the vain critique, or the double, or the shadow, of the communist parties, just as the black flag is only the double or shadow of the red flag.³⁴⁴

Here, Badiou clearly valorizes communism as the political theory from which to frame the general intervention set forth by metapolitics, while also reducing anarchism to a mere “shadow” of communist thought. Responding to this claim, anarchist theorist Gabriel Kuhn argues that Badiou’s “characterization of anarchism is simply false,” and once again reinvigorates the “anti-anarchist prejudice” initially arising out of the clash between the anarchists and Marxists over how the historical concept of struggle is to be conceived.³⁴⁵ In context, Badiou’s critique of anarchism arises out of a series of

³⁴¹ Alain Badiou, *Metapolitics*, 70.

³⁴² Saul Newman, *The Politics of Postanarchism*, 104. Although a reading of Badiou is essential to Newman’s own development of ‘postanarchism’ he is nonetheless “cautious” of positing “too easy [of] an identification of Badiou’s thought with anarchism,” 110.

³⁴³ Alain Badiou, *The Communist Hypothesis*, trans. David Macey and Steve Corcoran (New York: Verso, 2010), 155.

³⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 155.

³⁴⁵ Gabriel Kuhn, “The Anarchist Hypothesis, or Badiou, Žižek, and the Anti-Anarchist Prejudice,” published online: (http://www.alpineanarchist.org/r_anarchist_hypothesis.html.) 2012.

conferences and texts, which as he claims, are established to put the word “communism...back into circulation” consequent upon the failures of both Marxist critique and historical communist practice.³⁴⁶ Yet, although Badiou aspires to reinvent the idea of communism in response to the historical failures of the Marxist left, his argument regarding the way in which “we have to take up the challenge of thinking politics outside of its subjection to the state and outside of the framework of parties” makes it clear that the reappearance of the communist hypothesis appears as such in its adaptation to certain tenets that have always been central to anarchist political theory.³⁴⁷

Despite Badiou’s obstinate reliance on the authoritarian models of political emancipation, it is my contention that the critical questions metapolitical theory poses in relation to a theory of historical struggle might better find its theoretical elaboration within the anarchist tradition, rather than in Marxism. Historically, anarchists have remained sympathetic to several of the basic tenets of communism, and have often sought to rethink communism through the framework of anarchist thought.³⁴⁸ At the same time, however, anarchists have traditionally contested not only the means by which Marxist-communist thought and practice attempts to prescribe and implement a revolutionary program to overcome the class relations within the history of capitalism, but also what can—by way of contrast to Schmittian concept of the state’s monopolization of the political and politics—be referred to as the Marxist monopolization of a theory of the politics of struggle. To be sure, ever since the *Manifesto of the Communist Party* was published in 1848, Marx and Engels’s opening thesis pertaining to how the “history of all

³⁴⁶ Alain Badiou, *The Communist Hypothesis*, 36. Between the 13th and 15th of March, 2009 a conference took place in London under the title of “The Idea of Communism.” Other participants, or what Badiou refers to as the “great names of the true philosophy of our times” (*The Communist Hypothesis*, 36) included: Slavoj Žižek, Antonio Negri, Michael Hardt, and Terry Eagleton among others. Also see: *The Communist Idea*, eds. Costas Douzinas and Slavoj Žižek (New York: Verso, 2010).

³⁴⁷ Alain Badiou, *Polemics*, trans. Steve Corcoran (New York: Verso, 2006), 270.

³⁴⁸ See: Peter Kropotkin, “Anarchist Communism: Its Basic Principles,” in *Anarchism: A Collection of Revolutionary Writings*, ed. Roger N Baldwin (New York: Dover Publications, 2002), 44-78. This text offers one of the clearest statements regarding the case for free anarcho-communism. Here Kropotkin claims that, as anarchists, “[w]e are communists” (61). Yet for Kropotkin, insofar as anarchism might be connected with communism, it can only do so by beginning with a fundamental basis of anti-authoritarianism. Thus, Kropotkin writes: “[o]ur communism is not that of the authoritarian school: it is anarchist communism, communism without government, free communism” (61). The distinction Kropotkin makes here is essential to the elaboration of new schematics of politicization that do not relapse into previous political models.

hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles,” has not only been understood by scholars as the defining statement on the history of struggle, but also the very critical framework from which the very concept of struggle is to be elaborated.³⁴⁹ Thus, while Badiou maintains that the “black flag” of anarchism is none other than the “shadow of the red flag” of communism, it is perhaps better stated that anarchism has been overshadowed, if not historically than at least within the academy, by the dominance of the Marxist paradigm of class struggle. Yet, as anarchist theorist Cindy Milstein importantly notes, “it’s not that anarchists didn’t take this history seriously,” but more fundamentally that anarchists have always maintained that “there were other histories”—that is, “other struggles” that cannot be reduced to the form of class struggle.³⁵⁰ Indeed, it is these “other histories” and “other struggles” that Milstein argues is “something that anarchism would continue to fill out over the decades.”³⁵¹ Thus, while anarchists have indeed both participated in the history of class struggles and taken the history of this struggle as such quite seriously, anarchist political theory has traditionally maintained that by reducing the history of struggle to the universal logic of class struggle turns upon a thoroughly limited theory of resistance. It is therefore my contention that the very question of historical struggle must be rethought, not in a way that discounts the material reality of class politics and coinciding the struggles around them, but in a much more expansive and theoretically intricate manner.

Insofar as Marxist theory cannot itself account for the varying forms of historical resistance without radically reducing these struggles to the paradigm of class, one of the goals of this chapter is to make a case for a return to anarchism in order to fundamentally account for an anarchist theory of the political animated not in terms of the paradigm of class struggle, but in terms of a form of politics redefined as a form of *resistance to the exercise of government*. As anarchist theorist Gabriel Kuhn importantly suggests, rather than working within the paradigm of class struggle, perhaps contemporary theory ought to begin by asking an different “strategic question”—that is, whether “anarchism would

³⁴⁹ Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party,” in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, ed. Robert C. Tucker (New York: Norton and Company, 1972), 335.

³⁵⁰ Cindy Milstein, *Anarchism and Its Aspirations* (California: AK Press, 2010), 23.

³⁵¹ *Ibid*, 23.

not be a more promising name than the name communism.”³⁵² Phrased in terms of a “strategic question,” what is at stake here is not a simple valorization of anarchism over communism. At the same time, however, if one of the central goals of contemporary radical political philosophy is to invent new modes of politicization without relapsing into the previous models of political analysis and criticism, then what is required is a retheorization of the political that does not invoke the framework provided by previous models of politicization. To be sure, this is why Critchley borrows from Badiou’s work in order to help develop a more “anarchic” dimension to critical field of meta-politics.³⁵³ Although Marxist-communism asserts that “class struggle” is the principle motor of history as such, the very tradition of Marxism often relies on the same models of the political traditionally utilized in order to provide the basis for the problematic of authoritarian government. In this way, what I intend to demonstrate in this chapter is that there are several key advantages in developing and elaborating an anarchist hypothesis of the political which underpins contemporary radical philosophy, and yet, at the same time turns upon the question of resistance instead of “class struggle” as the basis from which such a theory of the political might begin.

An additional critique arising out of current discussions in radical thought thus revolves more directly around the questions, both philosophical and political, pertaining to the elaboration of a theory of politics as resistance. In this regard, critical theorist Benjamin Noys maintains that Badiou’s critique of anarchism can further be read in terms of an extended critique of the problem of resistance as developed in both anarchist theory and poststructural political philosophy. Despite its similarities with anarchism, Badiou’s political thought, according to Noys, maintains a “general skepticism towards what he regards as the anarchist faith in the ‘pure’ movement of resistance.”³⁵⁴ The problem Badiou finds with the development of an unadulterated movement of resistance, arises not so much against the question of resistance as a general political praxis, but

³⁵² Gabriel, Kuhn, “The Anarchist Hypothesis, or Badiou, Žižek, and the Anti-Anarchist Prejudice,” 4.

³⁵³ See: Simon Critchley, *Infinitely Demanding*, 112. Critchley, of course, is not uncritical of developing a specific anarchic dimension in Badiou’s work. To be sure Critchley claims that the attempt to develop an “anarchic meta-politics are somewhat at odds with Badiou,” (160 n31) and cites Badiou’s comments on the “anti-globalization movement” as exemplary of his anti-anarchist prejudice.

³⁵⁴ Benjamin Noys, “Through a Glass Darkly: Alain Badiou’s Critique of Anarchism,” in *Anarchist Studies*, 16, 2 (2008): 5.

rather, as Noys suggests, in the tendency to posit a “simple-minded opposition between power and resistance,” which reduces politics to a form of weak dialectics for Badiou.³⁵⁵ Badiou’s critique of resistance (launched here at Foucault as much as it is at the anarchists), is directed against a “constrained sense of the possibilities of politics that remains in a dualism of resistance versus power.”³⁵⁶ As Noys further argues, the “monolithic conception” of the power/resistance dialectic “prevents a properly political assessment of the complex arrangements of political power and the means by which capitalist state power might not only be resisted but overthrown.”³⁵⁷

Perhaps nowhere is the contestation over the question of resistance as a paradigm of struggle more apparent than in the debate between, on the one hand Simon Critchley who defends an anti-authoritarian anarchist position, and on the other Slavoj Žižek whose obstinate defense of authoritarian communism has become a mainstay in certain contemporary philosophical circles.³⁵⁸ Directed against what is vaguely referred to as the “postmodern left,” Žižek critiques the philosophers who “call for a new politics of resistance...by withdrawing from [the state’s] terrain and creating new spaces outside its control.”³⁵⁹ Thus for Žižek, the meta-political question regarding the “politics of resistance is nothing but the moralizing supplement to a Third Way Left.”³⁶⁰ As to be expected, Žižek (like Schmitt before him) maintains a static conception of the political as a strict dichotomy between the state power and no power at all; rather than “resisting state power,” Žižek contends that one should “ruthlessly” acquire and use “state apparatuses” to promote one’s political “goals.”³⁶¹ As Critchley points out, the debate between his own work and Žižek again reinvigorates “the conflict between authoritarianism and anarchism that is focused historically in the polemics between

³⁵⁵ Ibid, 5.

³⁵⁶ Ibid, 7.

³⁵⁷ Ibid, 7.

³⁵⁸ The debate between Critchley and Žižek over the question of resistance began in 2007 with the appearance of Žižek’s short essay titled, “Resistance is Surrender,” in *London Review of Books*, 29, 22, November 15, 2007. Critchley initially offered a short response to Žižek called, “Resistance is Utile: Critchley Responds to Žižek,” (*Harper’s Review*, May, 2008) and later dedicated a whole chapter of his text, *The Faith of the Faithless: Experiments in Political Theology* (see: chapter 5 “Nonviolent Violence,” pgs. 237-246).

³⁵⁹ Slavoj Žižek, “Resistance is Surrender,” 3.

³⁶⁰ Ibid. 3.

³⁶¹ Ibid, 4.

“Marx and Bakunin, or between Lenin and anarchism.”³⁶² To be sure, since orthodox Marxism which, to a certain extent, logically culminates in Žižek’s position, calls for a radical use of the state as the political means to achieve revolution, then we might think of the tradition of Marxism is itself the continuation of the “archipolitical” by other means. Suggesting that it is precisely the question of resistance and not that of the state that needs further elaboration, Critchley refuses the simplicity of the Žižek’s political binary, and argues instead that “genuine politics is about the movement between these poles.”³⁶³ What is crucial, for Critchley, is that the “movement” of the political is “neither given nor existent but created through political articulation.”³⁶⁴ Rather than amounting to a fundamental “surrender” as Žižek would have it, Critchley maintains that resistance is what arises in the “movement” of politics—that is, resistance becomes manifest and is created through “political articulation,” not as its essence, but as the very movement of politics.

With this key distinction between the Marxist and anarchist approaches to the question of posing politics in terms of historical struggle in mind, the remainder of this chapter seeks to reintroduce and affirm anarchist political theory as the theoretical framework from which to rethink the political at the horizon of government and state sovereignty, while at the same time demonstrating that such turns in political theory require an engagement with the question of resistance as the key concept from which a retheorization of the political and a politics of struggle becomes possible. To do so, I first reintroduce several common attributes that designate anarchism not simply as radical critique of state and capital, but more fundamentally as a dynamic political philosophy which transcends the Aristotelian and Schmittian paradigms of the political, as well as the Marxist paradigm of class struggle. As we will see, what is ultimately at stake in reintroducing “anarchy” as a seminal concept within the history of political theory is how this critical conception designates the pivotal point from which an alternative hypothesis of the political can be made, not as an archic nexus between the exercise of government and sovereign power, but in terms of a permanent field of struggle and conflict between

³⁶² Simon Critchley, *The Faith of the Faithless*, 227

³⁶³ Simon Critchley, “Resistance is Utile,” 1

³⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 1.

movements of governmentalization and movements of resistance. Thus, while I contend that anarchy marks the possibility of rethinking the political at the horizon of the state, I further maintain with this concept we can begin to point toward a way to fundamentally reread the history of the political through the concept of resistance. In other words, with the concept of anarchy marking the vital manner by which the field of the political is shown to designate a dynamic field of struggle between the exercise of power as government and the counter-force of resistance, what is ultimately at stake is to demonstrate how anarchist political theory redesignates the political as the historical field of agonistic struggle. Contrary, however, to both Schmitt's theory in which the dynamic field of antagonism made possible in the friend/enemy antithesis is itself contained and radically reduced to the sphere of sovereign power, and the Marxist paradigm in which the concept of antagonism is reduced to the sphere of class struggle, anarchist theory reveals the historical domain of the political as neither a struggle between sovereign states, nor between opposing classes, but in terms of an permanent agonistic struggle between the exercise of the government and the counter-movements of resistance.

2.2 Defining Anarchism

Given the way in which anarchism has often been misrepresented in both the popular imagination and the academy, it is an almost compulsory task for writers on the subject to begin by attempting to define exactly what anarchism is,³⁶⁵ or in other cases what it is not.³⁶⁶ Since its origins, anarchism has been fraught with several internal contradictions

³⁶⁵ Several definitive histories of anarchism begin by discussing the problem and difficulty of defining anarchism. See for example: George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements* (New York: Meridian Books, 1962), 9-34; and Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism*, 3-12. Furthermore, in contemporary scholarship, several texts include a section which thinks through the problem of defining anarchism. Although not an exhaustive list, see for example: Paul McLaughlin's *Anarchism and Authority: A Philosophical Introduction to Classical Anarchism* (Burlington: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 25-36; Nathan Jun *Anarchism and Political Modernity*, 111-119; and John Clark's seminal essay "What is Anarchism?" in *The Anarchist Moment: Reflections on Culture, Nature and Power* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1984), 117-140.

³⁶⁶ Given the way in which anarchism has traditionally been misrepresented, anarchist writers are often forced to outline what anarchism is not as much as they are motivated to define anarchism affirmatively. For example, see: Alexander Berkman, "The ABC of Anarchism," in *Life of an Anarchist: The Alexander Berkman Reader*, ed. Gene Fellner (New York: Four Walls Eight Windows, 1992), 277. Here, while introducing the basic ideas of anarchism, Berkman first attempts to dispel some of the more common and popular misrepresentations of the anarchist tradition. "I must tell you," Berkman writes, "first of all, what

and points of divergence that have continuously forged the need for endless texts clarifying its unorthodox positions. Both within and outside the movement, anarchism has historically and culturally been defined in numerous and sometimes contradicting ways. Unlike most traditions in political theory, anarchism does not therefore lend itself easily to simple classification. As historian David Goodway suggests, one of the central problems one comes to face when discussing anarchist thought, then, is that “it is notoriously difficult to delineate anarchism.”³⁶⁷ Since anarchism is neither a uniform theoretical doctrine nor a political program, the complexities of anarchist thought and practice appear to resist classification. According to one of the foremost historians of anarchism, George Woodcock, “simplicity” is therefore “the first thing to guard against” when writing about anarchism.³⁶⁸ As John Clark more pointedly reiterates two decades later, “any definition which attempts to define the term [anarchism] by a single idea” ultimately misunderstands the complexities of anarchism, and thus “fails abysmally to do justice” to the inherently varied phenomena to which anarchism refers.³⁶⁹

Although there remains a debate amongst scholars regarding the precise origins of anarchist thought and political praxis, there are three general ways of theorizing anarchism historically: as a trans-historical and trans-cultural open-ended set of ideas and practices; as a political theory developing out of the Enlightenment; and as an actually-existing revolutionary movement beginning in nineteenth century Europe. As both trans-historical and trans-cultural idea, historians tend to argue that the roots of anarchism “reach deep in the ancient civilizations of the East” and further that the “cynics of the third century came even closer to anarchism.”³⁷⁰ As a political theory, others suggest that

anarchism is *not*” (original emphasis). Anarchism Berkman concludes: “is *not* bombs, disorder, or chaos. It is *not* robbery and murder. It is *not* a war of each against all. It is *not* a return to barbarism or to the wild state of man” (original emphasis). As Emma Goldman comments in the preface to the 1937 reprint edition, the text was also written in order to dispel the “most fantastic notions about anarchism” in the popular press, which “fill their readers with bloodcurdling stories of bombs, daggers, plots of killing presidents and other lurid descriptions of those awful criminals, the anarchists, bent on murder and destruction” (xvii).

³⁶⁷ David Goodway, introduction to *For Anarchism: History, Theory and Practice* (New York: Routledge, 1989), 1.

³⁶⁸ George Woodcock, *Anarchism: A History of Libertarian Ideas and Movements*, 9.

³⁶⁹ John Clark, *The Anarchist Moment: Reflections on Culture, Nature and Power*, 118, 117.

³⁷⁰ Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism*, 54, 68. Others have additionally traced the idea of anarchism in similar ways. See: Robert Graham, *Anarchism: Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas. Volume One: From Anarchy to Anarchism 300CE to 1939* (Montreal: Black Rose Books,

the first clear statement of anarchist principles can be found in William Godwin's seminal text *An Inquiry Concerning Political Justice* (1793),³⁷¹ and is therefore a phenomena born from the Enlightenment.³⁷² Others, however, have found hints of the beginning of anarchist thought two centuries earlier than Godwin in Étienne De La Boétie's vitally important text the *Discourse on Voluntary Servitude* (1574).³⁷³ Focusing more exclusively on anarchism as a revolutionary tradition based in class struggle, others further claim that "[a]narchism did not rise as a primordial rebel state of mind as far back as Lao Tzu in Ancient China or Zeno in ancient Greece," but rather grew out of the "seedbed of organized trade unions...in opposition to classical Marxism's imposition of socialism-from-above."³⁷⁴ To be sure, the trouble in pinpointing the origins of anarchism demonstrate that the positions of anarchist thought and practice might be better characterized in terms of a tradition, rather than ideology, which historically develops from a broad repertoire of anarchistic ideas and practices. Insofar as the history of anarchism refers to a "complex and subtle philosophy embracing many different currents of thought and strategy," then we might understand "anarchism" as does historian Peter

2005), 1-4; Peter Kropotkin, "Anarchism—Encyclopedia Britannica Article," wherein he claims that the best exponent of anarchist philosophy in Ancient Greece was Zeno" (288 of the cited edition); and Randal Amster, *Anarchism Today*, page xviii.

³⁷¹ See for example Kropotkin's "Anarchism—Encyclopedia Britannica Article," in *Anarchism: A Collection of Revolutionary Writings*, ed. Rodger N. Baldwin (New York: Dover Publications, 2002), 289. Kropotkin states that Godwin was "the first to formulate the political and economic conceptions of anarchism, even though he did not give that name to the ideas developed in his remarkable work."

³⁷² See for example: Richard Sonn, *Anarchism*, (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992), 13. Sonn takes the position that as both philosophy and movement, anarchism was a "product of the mid-nineteenth century," and as such develops out of the thought of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, Denis Diderot, and the Marquis de Condorcet.

³⁷³ Murray N. Rothbard, "The Political Thought of Étienne De La Boétie," in *The Politics of Obedience and Étienne De La Boétie* ed. Paul Bonnefon (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2007), 11. Also see: Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism*, 109-112.

³⁷⁴ Michael Schmidt, *Cartography of Revolutionary Anarchism*, (Oakland: AK Press, 2013), 3. Schmidt's position has proved quite controversial within contemporary anarchist scholarship. In locating and defining anarchism in relation to syndicalist movements of class struggle, Schmidt limits the scope and boundaries of anarchism to the late 19th and early 20th century, which creates the problem of conflating anarchist history with anarchist philosophy. For critiques on Schmidt and van der Walt's work in dating and defining anarchism to the 1860's see: Robert Graham, "Black Flame: A Commentary," in *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies* 2013 issue 1, 189-192; and Nathan Jun, "Rethinking the Anarchist Canon: History, Philosophy, and Interpretation," in *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies* 2013 issue 1, 82-116; and van der Walt's response to Jun and Graham "(Re)Constructing a Global Anarchist and Syndicalist Canon: A Response to Robert Graham and Nathan Jun on *Black Flame*," in *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies* issue 1, 2013, 193-203.

Marshall further notes “like a river with many currents and eddies, constantly changing and being refreshed by new surges but always moving towards the wide ocean of freedom.”³⁷⁵ Less figuratively, we might add as the celebrated anarchist historian Rudolf Rocker long ago recognized that anarchism does not develop as a determinate theory or doctrine—that is, anarchism is not “a fixed, self-enclosed social system, but a definite trend,” or permanent strand in history, “which, in contrast with the intellectual guardianship of all clerical and governmental institutions, strives for the free unhindered unfolding of all the individual and social forces in life.”³⁷⁶

While there is a certain difficulty in locating the specific origins of anarchist thought and practice, anarchist theorists are faced with another difficulty insofar as no canon of work is, or can be, exhaustive of anarchist thinking—that is, neither a single individual, nor a group of thinkers, can claim priority over determining the limits and scope of anarchism. Indeed, recent developments in anarchist studies suggest that an insulated reading of the classical canon of nineteenth century anarchist thought is infinitely problematic and fails to recognize the expansive development of a varied range of tendencies in anarchist thought and practice over the past century. Despite, however, several attempts to think through this common problem, the contemporary anarchist milieu still faces a similar difficulty. Since anarchism has increasingly come to represent a large and diverse range of tendencies and ideas while directly intersecting with several other disciplines of thought and movements of resistance such as feminism,³⁷⁷ anti-racist

³⁷⁵ Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 3.

³⁷⁶ Rudolf Rocker, *Anarcho-syndicalism* (Oakland: AK Press, 2004), 31

³⁷⁷ Since its beginnings, anarchism has always had a strong relationship with the history of feminism in all its incarnations and, at certain cases, has directly collided with and inspired the continuation of feminist thought and practice. For early examples of the connection between anarchism and feminism see: *The Selected Works of Voltairine De Cleyre*, ed. Alexander Berkman (New York: Mother Earth Publishing Association, 1914), particularly the essay titled “Sex Slavery” (342-359 of the cited edition); although she was a fervent critics of the tendency of first wave feminists to rely on suffrage as the key to emancipation, Emma Goldman is often understood as the founder of anarcho-feminism. See Emma Goldman *Anarchism and Other Essays* (Maryland: Serenity Publishers, 2009), particularly the essays titled “The Traffic in Women” (112-123), “Woman Suffrage” (123-133), “The Tragedy of Woman’s Emancipation” (133-141), and “Marriage and Love” (141-149). Also see: Peggy Kornegger’s seminal essay “Anarchism: The Feminist Connection,” in *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas, Vol. 2: The Emergence of the New Anarchism (1939-1977)*, 492-499. For a contemporary collection outlining the intersections between anarchism and feminism see: *Quiet Rumors: An Anarcho-Feminist Reader* (California: AK Press, 2012).

struggles,³⁷⁸ anti-colonial,³⁷⁹ queer struggles,³⁸⁰ ecological struggles,³⁸¹ amongst others no unitary definition, it seems, is possible. Indeed, precisely because anarchism at once develops as a transhistorical idea, a socio-political philosophy, and a historico-political movement, all of which intersect with several other movements of struggle, critical consensus suggests a near impossibility in defining anarchism in either an overly simplistic or singular manner.³⁸²

Despite that anarchism's typically variegated developments and interventions render it incoherent as a political philosophy, several theorists have nevertheless made rigorous attempts to define certain key characteristics of historical anarchist thought and common practices throughout specific, theoretical, cultural, and philosophical contexts, while outlining several key characteristics common to anarchism as a distinct political theory. According to Uri Gordon, what is first required is itself a basic framework for understanding not necessarily the "content" of anarchist political theory, but a general outline regarding certain commonalities that might compose a preliminary understanding of anarchism. Accordingly, Gordon proposes three distinct, yet interrelated, ways from which a critical understanding of anarchism might begin. Anarchism is first a "social movement, composed of dense networks of individuals, affinity groups and collectives which communicate and coordinate intensively, sometimes across the globe."³⁸³ Second, "anarchism is a name for the intricate *political culture* which animates these networks

³⁷⁸ For example, see the chapter titled "The Nation in Light of Modern Race Theories," in Rudolph Rocker *Nationalism and Culture* (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1997).

³⁷⁹ On the history of anarchism and anti-colonial struggles see Benedict Anderson's seminal study titled *Under Three Flags: Anarchism and the Anti-Colonial Imagination* (New York: Verso, 2005).

³⁸⁰ See for example: Paul Goodman, "The Politics of Being Queer," in *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas, Vol. 2: The Emergence of the New Anarchism (1939-1977)*, 487-499. For a contemporary collection of essays outlining the intersections between queer struggles and anarchism see: *Queering Anarchism: Undressing Power and Desire*, eds. C.B. Darling, J. Rogue, Derric Shannon, and Abbey Volcano (California: AK Press, 2012).

³⁸¹ In the history of anarchist thought Murray Bookchin, perhaps more than anyone else before him, has sought to elaborate anarchism in an ecological context. See: Murray Bookchin, *The Ecology of Freedom: The Emergence and Dissolution of Hierarchy* (California: AK Press, 2005).

³⁸² See for example: Randal Amster, introduction to *Contemporary Anarchist Studies: An Introductory Anthology of Anarchy in the Academy* (New York: Routledge, 2009). Here Amster claims that anarchism resists simple classification, and therefore that any attempt "at creating some monolithic "anarchism" is doomed to failure" (2).

³⁸³ Uri Gordon, *Anarchy Alive: Anti-Authoritarian Politics from Practice to Theory* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 3.

and infuses them with content”³⁸⁴ Finally, anarchism is a “*collection of ideas*” (emphasis in original).³⁸⁵ John Clark, however, maintains that in order to link these seemingly disparate bodies of historical movements and schools of thought, a more comprehensive definition is required that takes into consideration both the historical and philosophical dimensions of anarchism, while simultaneously allowing for the continual evolution and trajectory of ideas and practices through its past and contemporary incarnations. In an attempt to develop a clear statement of the tradition of anarchist political theory, Clark proposes a four-point definition which not only tries to capture the diversity of the historical and philosophical character of anarchism, but in doing so opens up a preliminary way of defining anarchism as a unique form of political theory. “For a political theory to be called anarchist it must contain,” according to Clark, the following:

- 1) a view of an ideal, non-coercive, non-authoritarian society; 2) a criticism of existing society and its institutions based on this anti-authoritarian ideal; 3) a view of human nature that justifies the hope for significant progress toward the ideal; and 4) a strategy for change, involving immediate institution of non-coercive, non-authoritarian, and decentralist alternatives.³⁸⁶

Although somewhat burdensome, Clark’s definition provides an adequate summary of the differing components that can be seen as outlining the basis for anarchism as a distinct form of political theory. Without, perhaps, the third thesis (which has been the subject of much contention in anarchist thought)³⁸⁷ regarding a distinct perspective of

³⁸⁴ Ibid, 3-4

³⁸⁵ Ibid, 3-4.

³⁸⁶ John Clark. “What is Anarchism?”, 126-127.

³⁸⁷ It is in regard to questions pertaining to the relation between anarchist thought and an essentialist conception of human nature that forms the basic point of departure of the postanarchist critique of “classical anarchism.” See: Todd May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, 63. Here May maintains that at the “core of much of the anarchist project is the assumption, first, that human beings have a nature or essence; and, second, that that essence is good or benign, in the sense that it possesses the characteristics that enable one to live justly with others in society.” “Anarchism,” May therefore maintains, “is imbued with a type of essentialism or naturalism that forms the foundations of its thought.” Also see: Saul Newman, *The Politics of Postanarchism*, 5-6; 46-48. According to Newman, classical anarchism presupposes a “certain organic vision of social relations and a notion of rational enlightenment, which served as the moral pivot against the distortions, obfuscations and injustices of political power” (46). It is in this way that Newman maintains that anarchism “bases its critique of political authority on moral and rational foundations that derive from a social essence or being which is objectively understood” (46). At the same time, however, the postanarchist claim that anarchism relies on a benign conception of human nature from its critique is morally legitimated has not been without its own critics. For critiques of the postanarchist representation of “classical anarchism” see for example:

“human nature that justifies” and motivates anarchist struggle, recent definitions of anarchism as a political theory, albeit with minor variations, affirm this basic outline. Thus in his work on anarchism and political philosophy, Nathan Jun simplifies Clarks definition and maintains that the political theory of anarchism can be understood as: “a universal condemnation of and opposition to *all forms of closed, coercive authority* (political, economical, social, etc.), coupled with [a] universal affirmation of an promotion of freedom and equality in all spheres of human existence” (original emphasis).³⁸⁸ From these definitions it is clear that anarchism is neither simply reducible to a political critique of the state nor an economic critique of capitalism. Instead the critical impetus of anarchist thought is directed more specifically as a critique and rupture with the logic of the archē, a distinct logic manifest in the varying forms of political, economic, social, forms of authority, hierarchy, and domination.

At the same time, however, what is implied yet glossed over in these definitions is that anarchist political theory as such turns upon entirely different theory of the political that is critically paired with a shared emphasis on the politics of resistance from which anarchist political theory as such becomes manifest. In this way, we might add, as Gordon does, that anarchist political theory further includes both a “shared repertoire of political action based on direct action,” and the “shared political language that emphasizes *resistance* to capitalism, the state, patriarchy and more generally to hierarchy and domination” (my emphasis).³⁸⁹ Two ideas are of key importance here. First, Gordon maintains that anarchist political theory turns upon a form of political praxis “based on direct action,” and further that this distinct form of praxis is itself animated by a collective political discourse of “resistance.” Yet, while Gordon importantly emphasizes not simply the relation between anarchist political theory and the paradigm of resistance, but the way in which resistance animates anarchist political theory as such, this claim can be further amended in order to arrive at what I hold to be vital crux of anarchism. While it is true that a collective emphasis on resistance is what animates both the politics and political theory of anarchism, this need not be directed against the often monolithically

Jesse Cohn, *Anarchism and the Crisis of Representation* (Selinsgrove: Susquehanna University Press, 2006), 55-60.

³⁸⁸ Nathan Jun, *Anarchism and Political Modernity*, 116.

³⁸⁹ Uri Gordon, *Anarchy Alive*, 4.

abstract notions of state, capitalism, etc., but more specifically in opposition to the exercise of power as government often personified and manifest in state sovereignty, capitalism, as well as in the varying techniques of domination, hierarchy, and oppression.

Between then, on the one hand what Jun refers to as the anarchist critique of the manifestation of authoritarian political, economic, and social relations, counter-posed with the affirmation of freedom against the exercise of power as government, and on the other Gordon's emphasis on the political praxis of direct action there is a certain simultaneity and reflexivity that locates the political theory of anarchism within the paradigm of resistance. Despite the fundamental difficulty in defining anarchism, I want to briefly turn to a key definition of anarchism from Kropotkin's early writings in order to reveal how we might understand anarchism as pertaining to an alternative theory that at once takes the non-acceptability of power and the politics of resistance as its starting point. "The anarchist," Kropotkin writes, "denies not only existing laws, but all established power, all authority; yet the essence remains the same; the anarchist rebels—and this is where he begins—against power, authority, under whatever form it may appear."³⁹⁰ As Kropotkin first suggests here, anarchism begins with a unique position that takes the non-acceptability of all power and authority as its starting point—that is, anarchism according to Kropotkin presupposes a fundamental rupture with the logic of the archē. At the same time, however, this means for Kropotkin that anarchism "begins" or takes as its "essence" resistance against power and authority as the starting point from which the logic of the archē can become potentially ruptured. In other words, the anarchist critique and opposition to the exercise of power as government, as manifest in varying political, economic, and social forms, is itself animated and coupled with the politics of resistance; at the same time, the paradigm of resistance—within which the praxis of anarchism is located—is that which is made possible and finds its consistency within the critique of the political as the exercise of government. It is my contention that this understanding of anarchism forms the basis from which an alternative historical theory of the political can be posed in relation to the unique question of resistance that animates anarchism as such.

³⁹⁰ Peter Kropotkin, *Words of a Rebel*, trans. George Woodcock (Montreal: Black Rose Press, 1992), 78.

2.3 Anarchy as Philosophical Principle

*Anarchy is the word which comes from the Greek, and signifies, strictly speaking, without government: the state of a people without any constituted authority, that is, without government.*³⁹¹

--Errico Malatesta

In the history of political philosophy, the concept of *anarchy*, like the political theory of anarchism, is perhaps one of the most misunderstood and undervalued concepts in political theory. From its inception, the term anarchy has primarily been invoked by philosophers and political theorists in a pejorative sense, denoting both disorder and chaos, and as such the negation of political order; to be sure, the concept of anarchy has historically come to signify the converse anterior to what is typically understood as constituting politics.³⁹² If the history of politics and political philosophy has, as I have pointed towards, taken the concept of the *archē* as the implicit starting point from which a critical conceptualization of politics begins, then by its very definition the term anarchy is irreducible to the political as *archē*—that is, it is the philosophical and political concept by which we can begin to rethink the political at the horizon of the state and the exercise of government. Despite, however, the ways in which anarchy, and consequently by extension, the political philosophy of anarchism has and continues to remain marginal, the very concept of anarchy in both its philosophical and political senses is in every way seminal to the history of political philosophy, and is what ultimately renders the paradigm of struggle as resistance more acute.

Etymologically, the word “anarchy” comes from the Greek word *αναρχία* (anarchia in Latin) where the prefix *αν* designates ‘without’ and *αρχία*, translated as *archē*, which means at once “beginning,” “origin,” or “first principle,” and later as

³⁹¹ Errico Malatesta, “Anarchy,” in *The Methods of Freedom: An Errico Malatesta Reader*, ed. Davide Turcato, trans. Paul Sharkey (California: AK Press, 2014), 109.

³⁹² A classic example in which the term anarchy is misrepresented is to be found in Thomas Hobbes’ political treatise *Leviathan* in which the term “anarchy” signifies the natural condition of humankind prior to the advent of sovereignty (245) and, therefore, a social condition in “want of government” (130). Hobbes’s use of the term “anarchy” in reference to a condition prior to the birth of government has become a nearly inescapable point of reference for subsequent political theory. For a full study pertaining to Hobbes’s use of the term “anarchy” see: Ioannis D. Everigenis, *Images of Anarchy: The Rhetoric and Science of Hobbes’s State of Nature* (Massachusetts, Tuft University Press, 2016).

“sovereignty,” “supreme authority,” and “government.”³⁹³ Rather than assuming the primacy of an archē, anarchy in its philosophical sense designates an entirely different theoretical plane from which a new critical conceptualization of the political might begin that does not assume the state and government as its constituent components. As a philosophical concept, anarchy is the idea which, in the absence of the principle of authority, designates a critical position of exteriority from which to question the foundations of political thought. Unlike in the history of political thought, where politics is derived from and determined by the first principle of archē, anarchy in contrast designates a critical unfounding, or radical disordering, of these authoritative foundations—that is, it destabilizes the presence and dominance of an archē. It is within this context that Proudhon delineates what might be considered the earliest attempt at ascribing to anarchism one of its key philosophical characteristics in relation to the problem of the political. “The meaning ordinarily attached to the word anarchy,” Proudhon writes in his seminal 1840 text *What is Property?: An Inquiry into the Principle of Right and of Government*, “is absence of principle, absence of rule; consequently it has been regarded as synonymous with disorder.”³⁹⁴ Yet Proudhon is clear that it is not anarchism that expresses disorder, but rather “our accustomed habit of taking man for our rule, and his will for law” which forms the “height of disorder and the expression of chaos.”³⁹⁵ Reversing the accusations launched at anarchists back toward the heart of government, Proudhon famously suggests that just “as man seeks justice in equality, so society seeks order in anarchy.”³⁹⁶ We have seen how the paradigm of government has traditionally retained a sense of primacy in relation to political questions pertaining to how best to conceive of “order” in society. Yet, rather than attempting to think through the question of political “order” within the framework of an archē, Proudhon instead posits the concept of anarchy as an alternative beginning point—that is, Proudhon paradoxically suggests that we might also rethink the notion of “order” *within the topology of anarchy*.

³⁹³ Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 3.

³⁹⁴ Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, “What is Property? (1840),” trans. Benjamin Tucker, in *Property is Theft! A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology*, ed. Lain McKay (Oakland: AK Press, 2011), 134, n.6.

³⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 143.

³⁹⁶ *Ibid*, 133.

What is at stake for Proudhon is that the concept of anarchy might form the basis for a new principle from which to radically rethink both the terms of the political and very concept of politics as it has been understood in both society and philosophy. Given that the subtitle of Proudhon's text suggests that it is the very "principle" of government that forms the point of departure for his argument, anarchy—which, for Proudhon might be rewritten as an-archy to emphasis the prefix 'without'—comes to suggest the way of thinking through alternative political potentialities without assuming a formidable link between the political and the first principle of the archē. In its most basic form, the concept of *anarchy*, which Proudhon also defines in the same work as "the absence of a master, of a sovereign" reveals an alternative principle from which to reconceptualise the history of the political and politics without the first principle of the archē.³⁹⁷ Yet, if we understand the history of the concept of the archē as the principle that has at once conditioned our understanding of politics and ordered the field of the political accordingly we might, following Kropotkin, more critically suggest that the very question of "order" within political theory means to "speak of order as it is conceived in our present society."³⁹⁸ Thus, according to Kropotkin if we "take a look at this order which anarchy seeks to destroy," then the term *anarchy* can be better understood as referring to the "negation of *order*" (original emphasis)—indeed, the negation and struggle with the order of the archē.³⁹⁹ In this way, while Kropotkin maintains that "order is servitude," the concept of anarchy might therefore be taken in its most basic form as a radical disordering of the present order as archē.⁴⁰⁰ As that which creates a distinct rupture in the logic and order of the archē, Kropotkin maintains that a critical conception of anarchy thus finds its locus in the concept and practice of "disorder" rather than order. Yet rather than simply designating a condition of chaos, the concept of "disorder" and its relation to the term anarchy can be understood in the following way according to Kropotkin: "disorder"

³⁹⁷ Ibid, 134.

³⁹⁸ Peter Kropotkin, "Order," in *Words of a Rebel*, trans. George Woodcock (Montréal: Black Rose Books, 1992), 78.

³⁹⁹ Ibid, 78.

⁴⁰⁰ Ibid, 78.

[i]s the uprising of the people against this ignoble order...It is the revolt of thought on the eve of the revolution...Disorder is the abolition of ancient slaveries, it is the uprising of the communes...Disorder is the insurrection...an incessant struggle...Disorder is the blossoming of the most beautiful passions and the greatest of devotions, it is the epic of supreme human love.⁴⁰¹

In attempting to attain a preliminary definition of the concept of *anarchy*, two ideas in Kropotkin's definition are of key importance here. First, the relation between the concepts of "anarchy" and "disorder" refers to a radical rupture (in the sense provided by Rancière) with the logic and order of the *archē*. As that which takes a rupture with the logic of the *archē* as its starting point, anarchy as such designates an alternative basis from which to rethink the concept of the political. At the same time, however, because anarchy begins with a radical disordering of the logic of the *archē*, the term also comes to designate a specific mode of political praxis, a process where politics seeks to create a fundamental rupture with the present order as *archē*. As a politics of disorder, anarchy thus refers to the politics of "uprising", of "revolt, of "insurrection," and of "incessant struggle." As the form of politics, then, that animates a rupture with the logic and order of the *archē*, anarchy begins with and takes as its basis a theory of resistance that animates the concept of anarchy as such. It is in this way that we might come to understand the concept of anarchy as itself a philosophical principle, or alternative basis from which the question of politics and the political can begin to be rethought.

Emphasizing that the philosophical and political character of anarchism ought to be defined in relation to the foundational onto-political problem of the *archē*, nineteenth century American anarchist Benjamin Tucker (in a manner that prefigures Rancière's work) argues that anarchism is distinguished philosophically by its rupture with the logic of the *archē*. "Anarchy" Tucker claims:

[d]oes not mean simply opposed to the *archos*, or political leader. It means opposed to *archē*. Now, *archē*, in the first instance, means *beginning, origin*.

From this it comes to mean *a first principle, an element*; then *first place, supreme*

⁴⁰¹ Ibid, 79-80.

power, sovereignty, dominion, command, authority; and finally a sovereignty, an empire, a realm, a magistracy, a governmental office (original emphasis).⁴⁰²

In its most fundamental sense, “anarchy” as Tucker maintains here designates an opposition to archē. Paying careful attention to the etymological development of the term archē, Tucker identifies two ways of understanding anarchy in relation to the crisis of the political outlined in the previous chapter. Whereas in the pre-political sense “anarchy,” as Tucker suggests, first comes to mean “without guiding principle,” when extended into the political sphere it takes on an additional meaning as “without dominion” or “without authority.”⁴⁰³ Anarchism, as understood here by Tucker, cannot be reduced philosophically to a radical rejection of the state, but instead as a rejection, or opposition to, archē as both the “beginning” and “origin” of the political space which eventually becomes articulated as a “supreme power,” and as such develops as “sovereignty,” “authority,” and government. In other words, anarchy is opposed not just to the political as politeia, but the way in which politics affords primacy to the concept of archē as the terms of the political expressed in the continuity between sovereignty and the exercise of government. What is at stake for Tucker in affirming the concept of anarchy in opposition to the archē, is a critical conceptualization of anarchy as an alternative “fundamental principle in the science of political and social life.”⁴⁰⁴

In essence, the idea of anarchy as a “principle” appears at two levels in Tucker’s work. First, anarchy refers to that which precedes and eludes all archē; anarchy is prior to all guiding principles. Yet, at the same time, the notion of anarchy in the philosophical sense does not exclude the elaboration of a political conceptualization of anarchy. Indeed, we might understand anarchy as the principle which negates the totality of the archipolitical. While it appears contradictory to assert that which eludes the origin of principle as a principle itself, what Tucker ultimately points toward here are the ways in which the concept of anarchy formulates an alternative logic of the political which is continuously in conflict with the history of the archipolitical. Along this line of thought, in a crucial footnote to *Otherwise than Being*, Emmanuel Levinas sets forth a definition of

⁴⁰² Benjamin Tucker, *Individual Liberty: Selected Writings* (New York: The Revisionist Press, 1972), 33, original italics.

⁴⁰³ Ibid, 33.

⁴⁰⁴ Ibid, 42.

“anarchy” that helps to further elaborate what Tucker means by establishing anarchy as a “principle.” “Anarchy” Levinas writes:

cannot, under pain of contradiction, be set up as a principle (in the sense that anarchists understand it). Anarchy, unlike *archē*, cannot be sovereign. It can only disturb, albeit in a radical way, the State, prompting isolated moments of negation *without any* affirmation. The State, then, cannot set itself up as a whole.⁴⁰⁵

Anarchy, according to Levinas, cannot be understood as a political principle in the sense that it resists totality. Yet, as Levinas maintains here anarchy is that which radically disturbs the totality of the state. Although anarchy cannot be established as a “principle,” this same concept forms the critical topology which proves that the archipolitical can never establish itself as a whole. In Levinas’s thought, then, anarchy, is what resists the state’s claim to totality, and in this way forges a permanent, unsurpassable gap between two warring conceptions of the political—the sovereign *archē* and the figure of the *anarchē* which disturbs the terms of the political in a radical way. Yet, as Miguel Abensour observes in his analysis of the anarchist implications of Levinas, the fact that anarchy is rendered apolitical by Levinas does not mean that it has no relevance for political theory. Instead we find that the space carved out by “anarchy disturbs politics to the point where we can speak of the *disturbance of politics*...to separate an-anarchy from sovereignty, to separate it from a principle does not mean that anarchy does not affect politics or leaves it unchanged” (original emphasis).⁴⁰⁶

Rather than designating something apolitical, the principle of anarchy defines a point of rupture with the historical rationale that traditionally grounds the political within the space and practice of government—anarchy is what disturbs and disorders the political as a continuation of the logic of the *archē*. Although Levinas emphasizes that the concept anarchy can only disturb the state “without any affirmation,” anarchists have nevertheless consistently refused to reduce the notion of anarchy to a mere negation of

⁴⁰⁵ Emmanuel Levinas, *Otherwise than Being, or Beyond Essence* trans. Alphonso Lingis (Pennsylvania: Duquesne University Press, 1998), 194, n.3.

⁴⁰⁶ Miguel Abensour, “An-anarchy Between Metapolitics and Politics,” in *The Anarchist Turn* eds. Jacob Blumenfeld, Chiara Bottici, and Simon Critchley (London: Pluto Press, 2013), 94.

order. Thus, while Kropotkin suggests that “originally, anarchy was presented as a simple negation,” he also maintains the following key distinction:

“No State,” or “No Authority,” in spite of its negative formulation, had a deeply affirmative meaning when spoken by [anarchists]. It was both a philosophical and practical principle which signified that the whole of life of human societies, everything, from daily individual relationships between people to broader relationships between races across oceans, could and should be reformulated sooner or later, according to the principles of Anarchy.⁴⁰⁷

For Kropotkin, then, the radical “negation of all forms of authority,” which forms the basic logic behind the anarchist critique of society is paired with, according to Kropotkin, an “affirmation—the conception of a free society, without authority.”⁴⁰⁸ It is because the anarchist negation of the state is coupled with the affirmation of alternative political possibilities in life outside of the paradigm of government that Kropotkin maintains that “anarchy was understood by its founders as a great philosophical idea,” or “a general philosophical principle.”⁴⁰⁹

It is by taking the political and philosophical principle of anarchy in opposition to the first principle of an archē that we can begin to rethink the political at the horizon of the state. While in the previous chapter we saw how the term archē not only refers to that which designates the way in which the political assumes the form of the techniques of government exercised within the domain of the state, but also the first principle that brings forth politics as such, anarchy, in contrast, at once reveals an alternative beginning point for a critical conception of the political, as well as an alternative principle which is brought into being as a form of resistance to the exercise of government. Thus, insofar as the concept of anarchy designates the vital manner by which the political can be fundamentally rethought, the word itself has further significant political meanings. Indeed, the word anarchy also refers to an onto-political position of praxis—that is, a *condition of being without government*. As Marshall notes, the concept of anarchy therefore additionally refers to “the condition of being without ruler,” whereby, in the

⁴⁰⁷ Peter Kropotkin, “The Anarchist Principle,” trans. James Bar Bowen, in *Direct Struggle Against Capital: A Peter Kropotkin Anthology*, ed. Lain McKay (Oakland: AK Press, 2014), 197–198.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid, 197.

⁴⁰⁹ Ibid, 198.

political sense, anarchy “comes to describe a condition of people living without any constituted authority or government.”⁴¹⁰ Jun shares Marshall’s position and maintains that anarchy “can be roughly translated as the state of being without a ruler.”⁴¹¹ According to Marshall, then, “anarchy is usually defined as a society without government, and anarchism as the social philosophy aimed at its realization.”⁴¹² In its most preliminary sense, we can point toward two ways from which to begin to understand anarchy as a philosophical principle: the principle of anarchy at once signifies a radical position of *critique* and a position of *praxis*, a state of being without government.

In his entry on anarchism for the eleventh edition of *The Encyclopedia Britannica* (1905), Kropotkin further expands upon this notion of anarchy. Anarchism, which Kropotkin acknowledges as the first political theory “contrary to authority”—is defined as the “principle or theory of life and conduct under which society is conceived without government.”⁴¹³ In its philosophical connotation, anarchy designates a critical theory of the political “contrary to authority,” as well as a critical conceptualization regarding the possibility of political life without government animated by the principle of anarchy. Affirming the concept of anarchy as a “principle” contrary to the first principle which provides the political with an *archē*—that is, as an alternative political principle “conceived without government,” anarchism constructs a different set of relations for the terms of the political which seeks, at its core, to overcome the limitations of the archipolitical. Indeed, as Kropotkin claims anarchist political theory maintains that the “ideal of the omnipotent and beneficent state is merely a copy from the past,” to which anarchists “opposed it with a new ideal—*an-archy*: that is the total abolition of the state...by means of the free federation of popular forces.”⁴¹⁴ By opposing the concept of *anarchy* to the concept of *archē* we might, following Kropotkin’s logic, adopt the concept as itself the critical framework which provides the space for a theory of the political outside and against the history of the archipolitical. Anarchy is the philosophical

⁴¹⁰ Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, x; 3.

⁴¹¹ Nathan Jun, *Anarchism and Political Modernity*, 113.

⁴¹² Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 3.

⁴¹³ Peter Kropotkin, “Anarchism—Encyclopedia Britannica Article,” 284.

⁴¹⁴ Peter Kropotkin, “The Paris Commune,” in *Direct Struggle Against Capital: A Peter Kropotkin Anthology*, ed. Lain McKay (Oakland: AK Press, 2014), 440.

and political concept—indeed principle—from which the history of the political can be rethought in such a manner that does not leave the nexus between the exercise of government and sovereignty intact; instead anarchy at once designates that which resists the state’s claim to totality, as well as a unique form of political praxis that continuously ruptures the logic and practices of the archē.

2.4 Anarchy as an Historical Principle of Intelligibility of the Political

As a philosophical principle, directed not just simply as a critique of the state, but more fundamentally a critique against the first principle of an archē that reduces the political to the continuity between state sovereignty and the exercise of government, the concept of anarchy, then, must be thought against its typical use in political theory. Rather than invoking the term anarchy as the condition of chaos overcome by the advent of the state, we ought to understand the concept as a philosophical principle and coinciding form of praxis that disorders the continuation of the logic and order of the archē. Understood as such, the concept of anarchy as described above can also be taken to designate a unique way to reread the history of the political itself, even within the history of archipolitical thought. In this regard, although Hobbes might be understood within the history of political theory as one of anarchism’s foremost adversaries, it is by turning to his seminal political treatise the *Leviathan* that we might locate a key example within the history of political theory from which the concept of anarchy can at once be understood as an alternative principle of intelligibility from which to read the history of the political from the perspective of resistance. Indeed, in the *Leviathan* the concept of anarchy cannot only be shown as the implicit starting point for the main argument of the text, but also a seminal (albeit historically neglected) concept within the history of political theory that ultimately turns upon an alternative theory of the political that is to be overcome, or superseded, in Hobbes’s writings by the advent of sovereign power. While it has been noted that what Hobbes refers to as the continuity between the “state of nature” and the condition of “anarchy” is one of the more significant elements of which his political thought is based, it is my contention that the importance of Hobbes’s use of the concept of the “state of nature” lies in its fundamental gesture toward a critical

conception of the political as anarchy.⁴¹⁵ In other words, despite his intentions, what Hobbes ultimately reveals as the condition of “anarchy” in the *Leviathan* is not a violent “state of nature” eradicated with the advent of sovereign power, but instead a vision of a politics as anarchy inspired by a completely different understanding of the political.

As is well known and often cited, Hobbes invokes the figure of “anarchy” in the *Leviathan* at once as the condition prior to the establishment of sovereign power,⁴¹⁶ as well as the justification for the social contract that forms the artificial body of the sovereign state.⁴¹⁷ Although there has been some serious debate amongst theorists of the *Leviathan* regarding whether Hobbes intended his concept of the “state of nature” to be understood as a “kind of thought-experiment,” or a historically “practical possibility,”⁴¹⁸ it is my contention that the notion can be interpreted in terms of an agonistic conception of political conflict opposed to the theory of sovereignty.⁴¹⁹ Against, then, the more orthodox readings of Hobbes, in which the “state of nature” is posed in terms of the condition that needs to be “averted only by the existence of an ordered society governed by a coercive sovereign,” the *Leviathan* can instead be interpreted as masking an alternative principle of intelligibility from which to reread the history of the political agonistically.⁴²⁰ More specifically, although Hobbes maintains that the terms of the

⁴¹⁵ For the most comprehensive study in the concept of the “state of nature” in Hobbes’s thought see: Ioannis D. Evrigenis, *Images of Anarchy: The rhetoric and Science in Hobbes’s State of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014).

⁴¹⁶ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 130; 245. To be sure, Hobbes only uses the term “anarchy” within the *Leviathan* a handful of times. Instead Hobbes employs the terms “liberty,” “state of nature,” and “civil war” as interconvertible terms with the concept of “anarchy.” For Hobbes’ description of anarchy as a condition of nature prior to the advent of sovereignty and its relation to the concepts of both “liberty” and “civil war” see: Chapter thirteen “Of the Naturall Condition of Mankind, as concerning their Felicity, and Misery”, 86-90.

⁴¹⁷ Regarding Hobbes’s description of how “anarchy,” as a state of “nature” and “civil war” is eradicated and overcome by the birth of the sovereign commonwealth,” see chapter seventeen “Of the Causes, Generation, and Definition of a Common-Wealth,” 117-121.

⁴¹⁸ Richard Tuck, “Introduction,” to Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), xxix

⁴¹⁹ In his critical introduction to the *Leviathan*, Richard Tuck offers some critical evidence in support of what Hobbes intended through his use of the “state of nature.” Referring to a letter written to Hobbes by a colleague in 1657, wherein we find “there is now and has always been a war of minds...and that this war is exactly like the state of nature” (xxx). While the above correspondence refers to the “state of nature” as permanent conflict between ideas, Tuck takes this mean that Hobbes clearly “envisaged the kind of conflict which constituted the state of nature as something which could straightforwardly arise in practice, and which had frequently done so” (xxx).

⁴²⁰ F. S. McNeilly, *The Anatomy of Leviathan*, (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 1968), 159.

political are marked by the way in which the state and sovereign power arise through the eradication of the condition of “anarchy”—a condition manifest in what Hobbes refers to as “civil war”—it is my contention that the *Leviathan* nevertheless reveals a preliminary manner from which the history of the political can be reread from the perspective of anarchy.⁴²¹ Indeed, rather than premising the birth of politics upon the eradication of the condition of anarchy, what Hobbes reveals in the *Leviathan* is history of the political in its agonistic specificity—that is, a permanent struggle between the state and non-state in which the concept of “anarchy” is not only primary with regard to the politics of state sovereignty, but that which is manifest and animated through a unique paradigm of political resistance, or “civil war.” In this regard, it is necessary to briefly turn to some of the central components of the *Leviathan* in order to demonstrate how the theory of sovereignty, which Hobbes premises on the eradication of the condition of anarchy, effectively masks an alternative conception of the political that takes the condition of anarchy as its starting point, and further that this conception offers key insight on how to reread the question of politics against the historical paradigm of the archē.

It has been noted that Hobbes’s concept of the “state of nature” has become an inescapable point of reference for political thought, and further that this concept has subsequently “had a profound impact on our understanding of human nature [and] anarchy.”⁴²² In its most common understanding, commentators on the *Leviathan* have maintained that the “state of nature” in Hobbes’s usage means that the “condition in which man is placed by mere nature is one of conflict and insecurity—a war of every man against every man.”⁴²³ While there remains some critical contention in regarding the state of nature as “state of continual and overt violence,”⁴²⁴ it is clear that Hobbes is referring to a direct state of conflict.⁴²⁵ Yet it is in regard to this perpetual state of

⁴²¹ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 90.

⁴²² Ioannis D. Evrigenis, *Images of Anarchy*, 1.

⁴²³ Howard, Warrender, *The Political Philosophy of Hobbes: His Theory of Obligation* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1957), 48.

⁴²⁴ F. S. McNeilly, *The Anatomy of Leviathan*, 159.

⁴²⁵ See: Richard Tuck, “Introduction,” to Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, x-xi; xxx. Here Tuck notes how what Hobbes refer to in terms of the condition of anarchy and the “state of nature” is invoked in reference to the civil wars in England and France lasting from 1649-1652. According to Tuck, then, it is clear that Hobbes “envisaged the kind of conflict which constituted the state of nature as something which could straightforwardly arise in practice, and which had frequently done so.”

conflict that Hobbes forms the contextual background from which political order can be derived—that is, the state of nature designates the condition in which human beings conduct themselves in a situation without the existence of sovereignty, thus forming the background upon which the need for sovereign government becomes justified according to Hobbes.⁴²⁶ In this regard we might take the notion of the “state of nature” as the concept from which the notion of state sovereignty can be contrasted. Thus, as Evrigenis acknowledges, the “stark contrast between the misery that accompanies anarchy and the peace that comes through government, seems enough to explain the appeal of the image of the state of nature” in Hobbes.⁴²⁷ In other words, it is the state of conflict Hobbes represents through the concept of the state of nature that is ultimately contrasted with the theory of sovereign power in the *Leviathan*. Yet, this might mean, as Evrigenis argues, that the *Leviathan* nevertheless represents a “powerful and succinct account of a condition sufficiently undesirable to cause one to reconsider one’s plan for rebellion.”⁴²⁸ Because Hobbes understands the “state of nature” in terms of a condition of conflict that ought to be overcome with the politics of the state, it is my contention that the “state of nature” designates, not humankind in its natural condition, but rather a form of politics manifest in terms of an agonistic praxis of struggle—indeed a politics of rebellion and resistance—and further that Hobbes’s argument in favor of overcoming this condition can be interpreted as an attempt to mask this agonistic conception of the political as anarchy with a theory of sovereignty.

Indeed, at the beginning of chapter thirty-one of *Leviathan*, Hobbes establishes a specific nexus between the “state of nature,” “anarchy,” and the “condition of war,” and further maintains that these conditions are to be eradicated from the field of the political with the advent of sovereignty. In a passage that is in every way seminal to the history of political theory, Hobbes therefore writes that the “the condition of mere Nature, that is to say, of absolute Liberty, such as is theirs, that neither are Sovereigns, nor Subjects, is Anarchy, and the condition of War.”⁴²⁹ Here, Hobbes draws an explicit connection between the pre-sovereign condition of “nature” and “anarchy,” represented here as a

⁴²⁶ See: M.M. Goldsmith, *Hobbes’s Science of Politics* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1966), 84-128.

⁴²⁷ Ioannis D. Evrigenis, *Images of Anarchy*, 1.

⁴²⁸ Ibid, 1.

⁴²⁹ Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, 245.

“condition of war”—that is “nature,” according to Hobbes, is analogous to both the condition of anarchy and the praxis of civil war. To be sure, the eradication of this condition of anarchy through sovereign power and the advent of the commonwealth designates the premise against which the question of sovereign power is posed and, as such, is what Hobbes posits as the ultimate telos of the political. “The final Cause, End, or Design of men,” Hobbes therefore contends, is “of getting themselves out from that miserable condition of war.”⁴³⁰ What is required by Hobbes in order to overcome this “miserable condition of war” is not simply the advent of a central sovereign power, but more fundamentally a collective contract or “covenant” wherein all mutually agree to forfeit what might be understood through Hobbes as a pre-juridical right to autonomy: “I authorize and give up my right of governing myself, to this man, or to this assembly of men, on this condition,” Hobbes writes, “that thou give up thy right to him, and authorize all of his actions in a like manner.”⁴³¹ What is ultimately at stake for Hobbes is therefore not simply to demonstrate that the condition of sovereignty is preferable to the non-political conditions of “state of nature,” “absolute liberty,” and “anarchy,” but that the advent of sovereignty turns upon overcoming and eradicating a pre-juridical “right” toward self-governance manifest in the condition of civil war.⁴³²

While this passage is itself in every way seminal to the history of political thought, Hobbes’s use of the term “anarchy” is traditionally reduced to two simplified ideas. First anarchy is often taken by Hobbes as the concept that describes the absence of political society, or a state of nature famously defined as the “war of every man against every man.”⁴³³ Here in its most reductive sense, the concept of anarchy denotes for Hobbes the mere absence of sovereign power, and as such is rendered synonymous with a natural condition of “liberty” prior to the advent of sovereignty and the politics of the state. Additionally, however, precisely because the condition of “anarchy” describes the absence of sovereignty and a permanent condition of war, the concept paradoxically “signifies want of government.”⁴³⁴ Two ideas are of key importance here. First, the

⁴³⁰ Ibid, 117.

⁴³¹ Ibid, 120.

⁴³² Ibid, 245.

⁴³³ Ibid, 88.

⁴³⁴ Ibid, 130.

concept of “anarchy” in Hobbes forms the historical condition ultimately leading to the contract that constitutes sovereign power. In other words, this means that “anarchy” is what is presupposed by Hobbes in order to justify the collective need for sovereignty; sovereignty is therefore secondary to the condition of anarchy. In this way, the concept of anarchy in Hobbes’s thought describes a condition prior to the politics of the state and as such, on the other, the justification for the need of a state—that is, in both cases the reality of the condition of anarchy is what forms the beginning point of Hobbes’s theory. Yet, because the concept and condition of anarchy is what is presupposed by Hobbes in order to justify the need of government, as well as the manifestation of state and sovereign power, it is my contention that the condition of anarchy can be understood as an alternative principle from which to read the history of the political in a radically new manner. Given the ways in which Hobbes argues that the state and sovereign power is founded upon and arises out the attempt to overcome the state of anarchy, by his own logic Hobbes both demonstrates that anarchy, as a condition prior to the state, designates the implicit starting point for modern political philosophy as such. What is at stake, then, is not that the condition of anarchy in Hobbes designates a radical outside to the state and sovereign power, but rather that its presence fundamentally denies the state’s claim toward primacy and dominance within the history of politics and political theory.

While the intended goal of Hobbes’s text is to demonstrate the institution of sovereignty through the mutual transferral of the collective right to self-governance and autonomy, the very premise of this argument at once presupposes and demonstrates the possibility of an alternative theory of the political as expressed through the condition of anarchy—not as an essence transcendent to sovereign power—but that which is manifest and made possible in what Hobbes refers to as “civil war.” Yet, insofar as Hobbes understands anarchy as a condition of war prior and parallel to the politics of the state, we might further understand the condition of anarchy as designating a form of politics—indeed a form of political praxis—that is irreducible to, and arises in conflict with the history of the state. To be sure, it is this distinct sphere of praxis that, according to Hobbes’s own logic, is at once prior to the manifestation of sovereignty, as well as the condition by which the advent of sovereignty is itself historically said to overcome and eradicate. Indeed, Hobbes offers a brief glimpse of this dissenting form of politics when,

in Chapter 29 of the *Leviathan*, he discusses the varying causes that lead to the dissolution of sovereign power and commonwealth. Herein Hobbes writes that “the Liberty of Disputing against absolute Power,” the historical movements of rebellion referred to as “pretenders [of] Politicall (sic) Prudence,” are “animated by False Doctrines.”⁴³⁵ Here Hobbes reveals the ultimate polemic of his argument; what Hobbes attempts to eradicate with the advent of sovereign power is not a human condition wherein all war against all, but instead another form of politics that resists the absolute power of the sovereign, a politics of civil war. Following Agamben, we might therefore redefine Hobbes’s “state of nature” as a “mythological projection into the past of civil war.”⁴³⁶ In this way, whereas Hobbes draws an explicit connection between anarchy and the condition of civil war and traces the way in which the birth of sovereignty is said to eradicate anarchy from the field of the political, his theory of the advent of sovereignty also reveals, according to Agamben, how the political can therefore be read in reference to the political past of civil war. While we have already seen how the concept of anarchy can be understood as designating an alternative principle from which the political might be fundamentally rethought, here we can additionally see how the concept of anarchy in the *Leviathan* is revealed as pertaining to an alternative conception of politics as civil war.

In Tiqqun’s understanding of Hobbes the history of the political is attested to by the state’s struggle with the condition of anarchy, noticeable not as an essential exteriority, but politically in terms of civil war against the state. The history of the domain of the political is not then simply the history of the state’s monopolization on politics, but more fundamentally, the history of, on the one hand, the politics of the state which seek to eradicate anarchy from the field of the political, and the politics of civil war which seek to undermine the state on the other. Thus, “the point of view of civil war,” Tiqqun maintains, “is the point of view of the political.”⁴³⁷ For Tiqqun, then, the point of view of the political is not simply the historical elaboration of the paradigm of government and the primacy of the state. Instead, rather, it is the concept of civil war that

⁴³⁵ Ibid, 230.

⁴³⁶ Giorgio Agamben, *Stasis: Civil War as a Political Paradigm*, trans. Nicholas Heron (California: Stanford University Press, 2015), 53.

⁴³⁷ Ibid, 36.

forms the critical locus from which to read the domain of the political within the condition of anarchy.

In their unorthodox reading of Hobbes, Tiqqun at once reveals a radically new perspective from which to read the history of the political, as well as an alternative perspective of the political in which the critical question of resistance is rendered more acute. In highlighting how the concept of “civil war” acts as the historical principle from which we can reread the history of the political, Tiqqun therefore radically denies the Schmittian paradigm of sovereignty, while retaining (albeit in a radically different manner) a fundamental theory of agonism as the key component of the political as such. Tiqqun therefore accepts Hobbes’s thesis regarding the “state of nature” while fundamentally reversing its principle position; the state of nature as a condition of anarchy is not simply a violent war of all against all, but an irreconcilable struggle between on the one hand, the paradigm of sovereignty and the state’s attempted monopolization of the field of the political, and on the other the condition of anarchy or civil war manifest in the struggle against the state form. Despite their unorthodox reading of Hobbes, Tiqqun is not alone, and variations of this reading can be found amongst various anarchist theorists, as well as other critical theorists and philosophers such as Pierre Clastres,⁴³⁸ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari,⁴³⁹ and Michel Foucault.⁴⁴⁰ Thus in their critical inquiry into the anarchist anthropologist Pierre Clastres’ ethnographic work into non-state societies and the coinciding historical problematic of war, Deleuze and Guattari argue, in a manner that invokes the basic premises of Hobbes that “the state was against war, so war is against the state, and makes it impossible.”⁴⁴¹ Like Tiqqun, Deleuze and Guattari understand the history of the state as the simultaneous history of its own impossibility—that is, the struggle between the politics of the state, which attempt to put an end to civil war, and the struggle against the state, which finds its

⁴³⁸ See: Pierre Clastres, *Society Against the State*, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1974).

⁴³⁹ See: “1227: Treatise on Nomadology—The War Machine,” in Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* trans. Brian Massumi (Minnesota: University of Minnesota press, 1987), 351-423. In this plateau Deleuze and Guattari read the concept of war against the basic these of Hobbes’ *Leviathan*.

⁴⁴⁰ See: *Society Must Be Defended*, 87-114. Foucault’s reading of Hobbes is discussed in length in chapter five.

⁴⁴¹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 357.

historical elaboration in the concept of civil war. However, Deleuze and Guattari additionally argue that the concept of civil war describes a radical position of praxis in contrast to the politics of the state: Deleuze and Guattari write: “it should not be concluded that war is a state of nature, but rather that it is the mode of a social state that wards off and prevents the state.”⁴⁴² In this sense, civil war is not simply a state of nature prior to the state’s existence, but also a specific mode of praxis in which the politics arising out of the condition of anarchy, develop as strategic tactics of resistance against the state. For Tiqqun and Deleuze, and Guattari, the concept of anarchy, which is historically expressed in terms of civil war, is the very grid from which we can read the history of the political. At the same time, however, this alternative framework for understanding the domain of the political, which in its essence asserts that anarchy is primary with the state, additionally locates a fundamental dimension of agonism with the concept of civil war that lies at the heart of the domain of the political. To put it differently, anarchy—as opposed to the first principle of government—gives us an alternative way to conceive of the domain of the political situated at the horizon of the state, a conceptualization that locates a fundamental agonism between the state and anarchy as the substance of the political, and finds its expression in the concept of civil war. Such a theory of the political is not, however, set to exclude or deny the existence of the state, but more fundamentally to describe the irreconcilable conflict between the political as *archē* and the political as anarchy.

While anarchists have traditionally refused Hobbes’s description of the “state of nature,” they have nevertheless affirmed an alternative, critical understanding of the concept of anarchy, and have often sought to elaborate a theory of the political that begins with this alternate conception. Pointing toward the way in which anarchists have traditionally attempted to distinguish a critical concept of anarchy from Hobbes’s usage, Newman maintains that whereas sovereign “law bases its claim to our obedience on its supposed ability to put a stop to the violent anarchy of the state of nature, anarchists refuse this artifice of social contract theory, affirming instead a different vision of

⁴⁴² Ibid, 357.

anarchy.”⁴⁴³ Yet, for Newman this affirmation of a theory of anarchy in Hobbes invokes a philosophical aporia in which the historical concept of anarchy is inherently intertwined with the historical logic of the state and the advent of sovereignty. Newman therefore criticizes that “the anarchy that forms the ontological basis of social contract theory, and that the law and sovereignty are supposed to eliminate, provides for anarchists the ontological foundation for the possibility of life beyond the law.”⁴⁴⁴ At stake in Newman’s critique is the way in which the concept of anarchy as discussed by Hobbes in the *Leviathan*, has been misinterpreted by certain anarchists as indicating a transcendental position of pure exteriority outside of the state. Understood in this sense, “anarchy” as Newman maintains simply designates the transcendental condition of possibility from which anarchists might be able to justify the potentiality for life without government. Yet, Newman neglects to notice how the concept of anarchy, even as used by Hobbes in the *Leviathan*, does not simply refer to a “state of nature” prior to the advent of the state and the discourse of sovereignty, but more specifically toward an alternative conception of politics as resistance, a form of politics against which Hobbes’s theory of sovereignty is set to eradicate from the field of the political. Thus, by critiquing the idea of anarchy as pure place of exteriority, Newman neglects the way in which this “place” of anarchy is not an essential condition, either transcendent or prior to state sovereignty, but that which becomes manifest in the exercise of resistance against the formation of the state and the exercise of government. If we assume, as has been suggested by one commentator, that “at the center of Hobbes’s political theory lies the concept of the state of nature,”⁴⁴⁵ then we might further suggest that the condition of anarchy is not only that what is presupposed by Hobbes through the concept of the “state of nature,” but also that which reveals an agonistic theory of the political that is effectively masked by the theory of sovereignty.

Furthermore, while we have seen how the condition of anarchy as manifest in the praxis of civil war points toward an alternative principle from which the political can be understood anarchically, anarchists have often invoked the notion of civil war as the basis

⁴⁴³ Saul Newman, “Anarchism and Law: Towards a Post-Anarchist Ethics of Disobedience,” in *Griffith Law Review*, 21, 2 (2012): 308.

⁴⁴⁴ Ibid, 313.

⁴⁴⁵ F. S. McNeilly, *The Anatomy of Leviathan*, 159.

from which politics as such can be understood agonistically. In this regard, certain anarchists have located a specific dimension of agonism at the heart of political relations, and have, despite their differences, often invoked the concept of civil war to designate a fundamental struggle with sovereign power and the exercise of government. Anarchist journalist, Anselme Bellegarrigue, links the idea of civil war to the notion of government, and centralizes the idea of agonism as the inherent consequence of government. “Who says antagonism, says civil war,” writes Bellegarrigue, “from which it follows that who says government, says civil war.”⁴⁴⁶ Reversing the logic of Hobbes, anarchist historian and theorist, Rudolph Rocker argues that the paradigm of government inherently leads to “a constant war of each against all.”⁴⁴⁷ At the same time, Rocker centralizes the war against relations of power as the basis of anarchist politics: “anarchists represent the viewpoint that the war against capitalism must at the same time be a war against all institutions of political power.”⁴⁴⁸ Indeed, according to Rocker, the anarchist’s war against the state is what opens up the possibility for life without government: “[n]ew worlds are not born in the vacuum of abstract ideas, but in...ceaseless struggle...constant warfare against the already-existing.”⁴⁴⁹ Anarchist Emile Armand highlights how this dimension of agonism is what unifies anarchist theory. Armand writes:

As the word “anarchy” etymologically signifies the negation of governmental authority, the absence of government, it follows that one indissoluble bond unites the anarchists. This is antagonism to all situations regulated by imposition, constraint, violence, governmental oppression, whether these are a product of all, a group, or of one person.⁴⁵⁰

Furthermore, Voltairine de Cleyre maintains that while “[a]narchism seeks to arouse consciousness of oppression,” the agonism that lies at the heart of political relations

⁴⁴⁶ Anselme Bellegarrigue, “Anarchy is Order,” in *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas*, Vol. 1, ed. Robert Graham (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2005), 59.

⁴⁴⁷ Rudolph Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism* (London: Pluto Press, 1989), 12.

⁴⁴⁸ Ibid, 24.

⁴⁴⁹ Ibid, 54.

⁴⁵⁰ Emile Armand, “Anarchist Individualism as Life and Activity (1907),” in *Anarchism and Individualism*. (Bristol: S.E. Parker, 1962), 1

refers to the “sense of the necessity for unceasing warfare against capitalism and the state.”⁴⁵¹

In each of the above examples, it is clear that anarchism conceives of politics agonistically—that is as a permanent and irreconcilable struggle between the techniques of government exercised within the state and critical conception of politics as resistance, a “constant warfare against the already-existing.” Additionally, while Kropotkin believes that the very basic tenets of political theory might be rethought according to the principles of anarchy, he additionally demonstrates that this philosophical principle turns upon an alternative conceptualization of political praxis that places resistance as the central component of anarchist politics. According to Kropotkin, the principle of anarchy is distinct, politically and philosophically, because it “is a principle of the daily struggle...a principle distorted by statist science...vital and active, always forging new progress in spite of and in opposition to all oppressors.”⁴⁵² As a principle of struggle which, as we for will see for anarchist theorists, finds its consistency in the concept of resistance, anarchist political theory situates politics outside and in opposition to the state, and in this way prefigures the core idea of meta-political theory. Furthermore, by defining anarchism in relation to the principle of struggle, Kropotkin additionally centralizes resistance as the key component from which to rethink the domain of the political against the primacy of the state. The antagonism inherent to the political theory of anarchism is, according to Kropotkin, not represented by a “struggle against rulers, as was once the case, nor is it simply a struggle against an employer, a judge, or a police officer.”⁴⁵³ Instead what lies at the heart of anarchist theory is according to Kropotkin:

The struggle between two principles that, from time immemorial, have been at war with one another within society: the principle of liberty, and the principle of coercion. These two principles are once more engaged in a monumental struggle which must, of necessity, result in the triumph of the libertarian principle.⁴⁵⁴

⁴⁵¹ Voltairine de Cleyre, “Mckinley’s Assassination from an Anarchist Standpoint,” in *Exquisite Rebel: The Essays of Voltairine de Cleyre* eds. S. Presley and C. Sartwell (Albany: Suny Press, 2005), 301.

⁴⁵² Peter Kropotkin, “The Anarchist Principle,” 198-199.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid*, 199.

⁴⁵⁴ *Ibid*, 199.

As the ongoing struggle between the “principle of coercion” which is historically elaborated through framework of government and “the principle of liberty,” resistance is not only the defining character of anarchist political theory, but also the critical grid from which we can understand the domain of the political. Despite the postanarchist claim that “classical” anarchism presupposes a radical outside to the state in order to justify resistance against power, the concept of anarchy as opposed to *archē* does not presuppose a pure, uncontaminated place for resistance. Instead, rather, as we find in Kropotkin’s analysis above, a critical conception of anarchy at once designates the *means* by which certain historical popular forces resist the state, as well as the historical principle of intelligibility from which to read the history of the political as such.

What is crucial is that the resurgence of anarchist philosophy ought to be understood as an attempt to rethink the history of the political—that is, anarchism constructs a different set of relations of the political whereby politics can be situated outside of the state, and as such reinvigorates the philosophical focus on the counter-history to the paradigm of government. Thus, in a more recent work, Tiqqun amplifies Kropotkin’s logic and elevates the analysis of the counter-history of the paradigm of government as the central task for political theory. According to Tiqqun: “[w]e have, then, the official history of the modern State, namely the grand juridico-formal narrative of sovereignty: centralization, unification, rationalization. And also there is a counter-history, which is the history of its impossibility.”⁴⁵⁵ “You have to look into this other history,” Tiqqun concludes, in order to begin to rethink the political at the horizon of the state.⁴⁵⁶ Thus, for Tiqqun:

There is an official history of the state in which the State seems to be the one and only actor, in which the advances of the state monopolization on the political are so many battles chalked up against an enemy who is invisible, imaginary, and precisely *without history*. And then there is a counter history written from the perspective of civil war... This counter history reveals a political monopoly that is

⁴⁵⁵ Tiqqun, *Introduction to Civil War*, 117.

⁴⁵⁶ *Ibid*, 117.

constantly threatened by the recomposition of autonomous worlds, of non-state collectivities (original emphasis).⁴⁵⁷

Like Kropotkin, Tiqqun understands the history of the political in terms of a permanent struggle between the state and “non-state collectivities”—that is, a struggle between history of the state and the parallel, yet heterogeneous, counter-historical impossibility of the state manifest through the logic of civil war. Following Tiqqun it is my contention that an analysis of this counter-history to the state reveals the specificity of the political in a radically new way that is irreducible to the logic of the archē. Furthermore, insofar as this counter-history of the state is historically manifest as a politics of civil war, it also my contention in what follows that the politics of resistance might become the new basis from which the political can be conceived within the topology of anarchy.

2.6 Anarchy as a Historical Paradigm of Resistance

*Let us always remember that the oppression of governments has no other limit than the resistance offered to it.*⁴⁵⁸

--Errico Malatesta

Compared with the amount of texts and space afforded to the political theorists working within the paradigms of government and state sovereignty, the history of works focusing on the counter-history of government as manifest through resistance have been quite scarce. Nevertheless, as outlined in the previous section, there have been a few notable readings of the history of the political in which the basic theses of Hobbes can be reversed in order to demonstrate a counter-history of the political as told through the perspective of anarchy and the paradigm of civil war. While Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the “war machine” is invoked to account for (via Clastres) the presence of “counter-State societies,” or the historical movements “directed against the State-form, actual or virtual,”⁴⁵⁹ Tiqqun reverses the basic premises of Hobbes in order to demonstrate how the history of the political is itself the history of “civil war” attested to

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid, 111.

⁴⁵⁸ Errico Malatesta, “The Duties of the Present Hour,” in *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas, Volume One: From Anarchy to Anarchism 300CE-1939*, ed. Robert Graham (New York: Black Rose Books, 2005), 183.

⁴⁵⁹ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 359.

by a permanent agonistic struggle with the modern state. It is my assertion, however, that what is ultimately at stake in these alternative readings, is that this counter-history of the political turns upon a certain continuity between an elaboration of the political from the perspective of anarchy and a corresponding politics that assumes the praxis of resistance in its most paradigmatic form, not only in terms of the principle from which to read the political, but as a historical paradigm of struggle, a form of politics as resistance. We have already seen how anarchism ultimately turns upon a different historical conception of struggle opposed to the Marxist notion of “class struggle,” and further that this notion is supported as an alternative manner from which to read the history of the political as the history of resistance manifest in the paradigm of civil war. It is now important to look at a more in depth exploration of the relationship anarchism poses between the history of the political and a critical conceptualization of a form of politics as resistance. To do so, it is necessary to turn to a reading of several of Kropotkin’s works in which he traces the history of the political as expressed through an permanent agonistic struggle between the principle of government and the counter-historical movements of resistance. Through Kropotkin, anarchism is defined as the paradigmatic expression of these forms of resistance. Yet, as I will ultimately suggest, Kropotkin’s reading of history as the historical struggle between the exercise of government and the counter-historical movements of resistance coincides with a theory of civil war and is animated by it.

Aside from being one of Russia’s leading revolutionaries during the late 19th century, as both philosopher and geographer Kropotkin is one of the more philosophically systematic and profound thinkers involved in the early development of anarchist political theory. Indeed, as the historian Peter Marshall claims, Kropotkin gave anarchism “a philosophical respectability at a time when it was increasingly being associated in the popular press with mindless terrorism.”⁴⁶⁰ It is in this way that George Woodcock maintains that Kropotkin was one of the “great figures of the anarchist tradition, the equal of Godwin, Proudhon, and Bakunin.”⁴⁶¹ It is often noted that Kropotkin is perhaps best known for his work *Mutual Aid*, in which he attempts to provide a scientific ground for anarchist philosophy by arguing that the political theory of

⁴⁶⁰ Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 309.

⁴⁶¹ George Woodcock, *Anarchism and Anarchists* (Canada: Quarry Press, 1992), 189.

anarchism finds its ultimate expression and is further developed through an analysis of the existing tendencies in both nature and society.⁴⁶² Like Godwin and Proudhon before him, Kropotkin bases the development of anarchism in *Mutual Aid* upon a particular view of nature and an analysis of certain existing tendencies within human societies. For Kropotkin, then:

Anarchism represents more than a mere mode of action and a mere conception of a free society; that it is part of a philosophy, natural and social, which must be developed in a quite different way from the metaphysical or dialectical methods which have been employed in the sciences dealing with men.⁴⁶³

Here we can see how Kropotkin sought to prove that anarchist theory finds its confirmation in an analysis of the existing tendencies within both nature and society. While Kropotkin's view that anarchism is firmly based in a naïve view of human nature is often critiqued for grounding anarchism within an essentialist framework,⁴⁶⁴ Marshall points to how what Kropotkin refers to in terms of the natural basis that underpins anarchist thought, more correctly "demonstrate[s] that anarchism represents existing tendencies in society."⁴⁶⁵ In other words, what gives anarchism its basis for Kropotkin is not a reliance on a benign understanding of human nature, but rather an analysis of certain tendencies within history that represent a struggle toward achieving a condition of anarchy. It is therefore my argument that what is generally posited as a form of essentialism inherent to Kropotkin's thought is not to be found in a benign humanism, but is historically expressed in movements of resistance. More specifically by providing an alternative grid from which to understand the history of the political as the ongoing struggle between the state and the counter-historical movements of resistance, it is my contention that Kropotkin's value as a philosopher arises through the way in which he attempts to rethink anarchism in a way that coincides with an interpretation of history as a movement animated by the politics of resistance.

Like many anarchist theorists, Kropotkin formulates a general critique of the state and the exercise of government as the critical axiom from which to locate the basic tenets

⁴⁶² See: Paul Avrich, *Anarchist Portraits* (New Jersey, Princeton University Press, 1988), 59.

⁴⁶³ Qtd. in Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 317-318.

⁴⁶⁴ See: Saul Newman, *The Politics of Postanarchism*, 36.

⁴⁶⁵ Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible*, 336

of anarchist political theory. In analyzing the origin and basis of the state Kropotkin stresses that the governmental principle has remained the dominant starting point for critical conceptualization of the political in the history of political theory. In several works, particularly *The State: Its Historic Role* and *Modern Science and Anarchism*, Kropotkin provides a significant analysis of the origins of the state as a historically specific, albeit contingent, form of political organization which evolves to ensure the monopolization of the political within the framework of government. Nonetheless, despite the ways in which the critique of the state is often taken for theorists and historians as the very basis from which anarchist political theory stems, and hence the basis from which an anarchist conception of society might arise, Kropotkin argues to the contrary that the critique of state composes only one part of the principal tenets of anarchist theory. As Kropotkin writes in *Modern Science and Anarchism*:

When we look into the origin of the anarchist conception of society, we see that it has a double origin: the criticism, on the one side, of the hierarchical organizations and the authoritarian conceptions of society; and on the other side, the analysis of the tendencies that are seen in the progressive movements of mankind, both in the past, and still more so at the present time.⁴⁶⁶

Despite the way in which anarchism is often reduced to a radical critique of the state, what is significant about Kropotkin's conceptualization regarding the "origins" of anarchism, is that the critique of the state is paired with the "analysis of the tendencies" in society—tendencies which, for Kropotkin, develop as movements of historical resistance to the principle of governance. As he writes elsewhere, the anarchist "conception" of society is fundamentally different than the statist framework because it is not "constructed on the *a priori* method;" instead anarchism is derived "from an *analysis of tendencies* that are at work already...reinforcing the no-government tendency" (original emphasis).⁴⁶⁷ Indeed, while anarchist historians and theorists tend to emphasize *Mutual Aid* as Kropotkin's contribution to anarchism insofar as it attempts to provide a scientific basis supporting his theory of anarchism, it is my contention that the

⁴⁶⁶ Peter Kropotkin, "Modern Science and Anarchism," In *Direct Struggle Against Capital: A Peter Kropotkin Anthology*, ed. Lain McKay (Oakland: AK Press, 2014), 181.

⁴⁶⁷ Peter Kropotkin, "Anarchism," In *Direct Struggle Against Capital: A Peter Kropotkin Anthology*, ed. Lain McKay (Oakland: AK Press, 2014), 164.

importance of Kropotkin resides more specifically in the way that he rethinks the political on condition of a theory of resistance, a permanent and ongoing struggle in which the tendency toward non-governance is historically manifest as a form of politics as resistance against the techniques of government and the logic of the state.⁴⁶⁸

In *The State: Its Historic Role*, the “double origin” Kropotkin locates at the beginnings of anarchist thought is further elaborated as an alternative theory of the political corresponding with a historical theory of resistance that animates an agonistic conception of the political. According to Kropotkin, a radical critique of the state “not only includes the existence of a power situated above society, but also...a whole mechanism of legislation and policing [which] has to be developed in order to subject some classes to the domination of others.”⁴⁶⁹ Here, on the side of critique, Kropotkin directly locates the state within the paradigm of government: the concept of the state is invoked in order to describe the existence of a sovereign power and mechanisms of “legislation and policing,” which assumes the form of a government, and hence the “domination of others,” as its principal domain. Regardless of the importance and attention he often attaches to the state, Kropotkin’s focus, as he often reiterates throughout several of his works, is not so much to develop a critique of the state—radical critiques of the state for Kropotkin have existed since its inception. Rather than taking the state and the paradigm of government as the ultimate horizon for the domain of the political, this is why in *The State: Its Historical Role* Kropotkin first defines the state not only to trace the way in which the political assumes the form of a state, but in order to demonstrate that the history of the state—indeed its historic role—reveals a political monopoly that is constantly threatened by another historical tendency toward non-governance. As we will see, by tracing the origins of the state, Kropotkin uncovers something fundamental regarding the logic of the development and manifestation of sovereign power, which dislocates the state’s claim to a monopolization on the political.

⁴⁶⁸ For examples of these common readings of Kropotkin, see: George Woodcock, *Anarchism and Anarchists* (Canada: Quarry Press, 1992), 191; Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (California: PM Press, 2010), 309.

⁴⁶⁹ Peter Kropotkin. “The State: Its Historic Role.” In *Direct Struggle Against Capital: A Peter Kropotkin Anthology*, ed. Lain McKay (Oakland: AK Press, 2014), 254.

In addition to tracing the way in which the domain of the political is shaped by the paradigm of government, which in the 16th century assumed the form of the modern state, Kropotkin maintains that the historic role of the state as such:

developed in the history of human societies to prevent the direct association of men to shackle the development of local and individual initiative, to crush existing liberties, to prevent their new blossoming—all this in order to subject the masses to the will of minorities.⁴⁷⁰

Like Hobbes, Kropotkin presupposes a radical outside to the state, not a state of nature, but as alternative political possibilities that are crushed by the appearance of the state. As Kropotkin maintains, the state is therefore an entity which “in its very essence” appears as the “greatest hindrance to the birth of a society based upon equality and liberty, as well as the historic means designed to prevent this blossoming.”⁴⁷¹ The historical development of the state is born, according to Kropotkin, in order to eradicate the existence of alternative forms of political associations and to further prevent new forms from arising; in short, the state, is according to Kropotkin, “an obstacle to the social revolution.”⁴⁷² Precisely because the state develops in such a manner that crushes alternative forms of political and social association which, as Kropotkin claims, are always “existing,” as well as to prevent the possibility of future non-state forms of association, what is at stake is to demonstrate the logic of how the state obtained and retained its monopolization of the political in the Schmittian sense. Yet, this monopolization of the political, which Kropotkin claims is the very role of the state, reveals the history of the political is the history of the of the state’s ongoing struggle with its own outside; the appearance of the state simultaneously reveals the appearance of non-state political realities and possibilities. In other words, Kropotkin traces not just the primacy of government through its historical incarnation in the modern state, but also that this history is paired and arises with its own counter-history—a counter-history which, as we will see, becomes manifest in history through resistance. Rather than beginning with what Kropotkin refers to as “an almost childish argument,” or the implicit assumption

⁴⁷⁰ Ibid, 256.

⁴⁷¹ Ibid, 253.

⁴⁷² Ibid, 253.

that the “state exists and represents a powerful ready-made organization,”⁴⁷³ the history of the political is better understood according to Kropotkin in terms of the expression that “throughout the history of our civilization, two traditions, two opposing tendencies have confronted each other...the authoritarian and the libertarian.”⁴⁷⁴ To be sure, by conceiving of the domain of the political as a permanent struggle between the principle of government and the principle of anarchy, Kropotkin radically inscribes the concept of resistance into the very basis of his understanding of the history of politics.

Although the state and the paradigm of government have remained the dominant philosophical model for social and political organization this history, according to Kropotkin, is simultaneously the history of another tendency that arises in opposition to the “dominating, governing tendency that found its expression in the Church, the State, and Authoritarian Socialism.”⁴⁷⁵ In this regard, Kropotkin claims that within the “history of human society there has always been found in it two currents of thought and action—two different tendencies.”⁴⁷⁶ It is by paying close attention to these two differing tendencies that we can begin to distinguish a new critical framework from which to rethink the political at the horizon of the state. For Kropotkin, then, the history of political is at once the expression of an “authoritarian tendency, represented by [those] who maintained that society must be organized by a central authority, and that this authority must make laws and be obeyed,” and “in opposition to this authoritarian current [a] popular current, which worked at organizing society...on a basis of equality, without authority,” which as Kropotkin claims “is represented now by the Anarchists.”⁴⁷⁷ Kropotkin thus locates a new way from which to read the history of the political through the vital, agonistic struggle between these two principles. If the history of the political is, according to Kropotkin the struggle between these two currents, then Kropotkin radically denies the state’s claim to primacy, and gives us a new grid from which to reread the history of the political as a history of struggle and civil war.

⁴⁷³ Ibid, 256.

⁴⁷⁴ Ibid, 258.

⁴⁷⁵ Peter Kropotkin, “A few Thoughts about the Essence of Anarchism,” In *Direct Struggle Against Capital: A Peter Kropotkin Anthology*, ed. Lain McKay (Oakland: AK Press, 2014), 201.

⁴⁷⁶ Ibid, 201.

⁴⁷⁷ Ibid, 201.

Although Kropotkin's pamphlet *Modern Science and Anarchism* can be credited, like his text *Mutual Aid*, with a critical attempt to give anarchist philosophy a scientific foundation, much of the pamphlet instead traces the history of the political through an analysis of the tendency toward governance and the tendency toward non-governance; as such the text is better read as a fundamental statement on the history of the political. In this text, Kropotkin argues that the political cannot be reduced to the politics of the state because "side by side with this authoritarian current, another current asserted itself...[and] rose against the principle of governance, against the supporters of the state."⁴⁷⁸ Rather than taking government as an implicit starting point for a critical theory of politics, the domain of the political is, according to Kropotkin, better expressed in terms of an ongoing and permanent dimension of agonism between the "principle of governance" and the "anarchist principle," which arises historically against and outside of the state. For Kropotkin, then, the history of the political is neither identical with the exercise of the power of the state, nor analogous to the terms of economic class struggle; instead, rather "it is the struggle between two great principles that, from time immemorial, have been at war with one another within society."⁴⁷⁹ Albeit in a much different manner Kropotkin, like Hobbes before him, locates the concept of war as the very grid that makes the political appear as such. By positing that the history of the political as an ongoing struggle between the history of governmentality and the anarchist tendency toward non-governance, Kropotkin's goal is not to reduce the history of politics to a weak dialectic between the principle of governance and anarchy; instead, rather, what is at stake for Kropotkin is to demonstrate that the historical manifestation of government, which has traditionally been privileged as the dominant model for human social relations, is simultaneously parallel with its own heterogeneous counter-history of resistance. To be sure, Kropotkin's value as a political theorist arises from his endeavor to demonstrate that paired with history of the state, regardless of its dominance, is simultaneously the history of a dynamic expression of an alternative tendency in opposition to the paradigm of government.

⁴⁷⁸ Peter Kropotkin, "Modern Science and Anarchism," 177.

⁴⁷⁹ Peter Kropotkin, "The Anarchist Principle," 199.

Taking these two tendencies as the critical axiom on which to read the history of politics, Kropotkin expands upon the logic of Marx and Engel's thesis that human history develops in terms of class struggle, and asserts the history of politics is better expressed in terms of a permanent struggle between the principle of government manifest in the state and the movements of resistance against this very principle. Kropotkin's counter-thesis posed against the traditional understanding of class struggle reads as follows: "From the earliest times these two currents were found struggling against each other. They continue to do so, and the history of mankind is the history of their struggles."⁴⁸⁰ Here Kropotkin not only offers an alternative critical framework from which to read the history of politics, he locates a fundamental theory of agonism at the heart of the history of the political. Unlike Schmitt, however, who locates the substance of the political in the antagonism between friend and enemy, or the Marxist antagonism between classes, in Kropotkin's thought the substance of the political is located in fundamental and permanent antagonism between the principle of governance and the anarchist principle; it is this agonistic struggle between the principle of government and the expression of resistance that makes the political visible as such according to Kropotkin.

The distinction Kropotkin proposes between anarchist and governmental conceptions of the political—between the state and non-state—is therefore vital not only to the anarchist critique of the archipolitical, but also to understanding the way in which a new philosophy of politics arise from the interpretation of the permanent conflict between these two conceptions of the political. If the politics of the state are made manifest through the elaboration of government, "anarchism" Kropotkin writes "owes its origins"

To the constructive, creative energy activity of the people, by which all institutions of communal life were developed in the past, and to a protest—a revolt against the external force which had thrust itself upon these institutions.⁴⁸¹

By understanding history as the continual struggle between anarchy and government, Kropotkin argues that anarchism can be seen as developing alongside (albeit in conflict with) the history of archipolitical. Two ideas are of immediate importance here. First, anarchism is according to Kropotkin always in existence in the very histories of

⁴⁸⁰ Peter Kropotkin, "A few Thoughts About the Essence of Anarchism," 201.

⁴⁸¹ Peter, Kropotkin, "Modern Science and Anarchism," 149.

individual and popular movements of resistance. Precisely because anarchism historically originates in movements of resistance, Kropotkin's point is to demonstrate how an anarchist theory of politics does not arise by means of an essentialist universal worldview, nor that it is tied to a few major thinkers or texts, but that the complexities of anarchist theory are born in many different currents, thoughts, and strategies which assume the form of resistance to the principle of governance. Similar to the way in which anarchist historian Rudolph Rocker observes how "anarchism...is a definite trend in the history of mankind...in contrast [to] governmental institutions," Kropotkin argues that anarchism a recognizable tendency in history, a tendency that historically develops in opposition to the principle of governance.⁴⁸² In this way, anarchism is born and continuously renewed throughout history in the "creative, constructive force of the masses...in opposition to those who put their hope in governing minorities."⁴⁸³ According to Kropotkin, then, the history of anarchism is therefore attested to by the history of the "revolts of both individuals and the nations against the representatives of force."⁴⁸⁴ It is these movements of revolt that Kropotkin claims "were imbued with the anarchist spirit,"⁴⁸⁵ and several of Kropotkin's works are set to trace the appearance of the anarchist tendency throughout history.

Taking Kropotkin's lead, we can point toward the ways in which the existence of the historical movements from which anarchism originates are marked by a fundamental revolt with the principle of governance, and not an a priori essence of human nature in the sense critiqued by the postanarchists; anarchism owes its historical origins to the manifestation of a form of politics as resistance. What is particularly distinctive regarding the turn toward anarchism is therefore not only the formation of politics beyond the framework of the state, but a form of politics that is centered on, and arises out of, the manifestation of resistance to the archipolitical. Like the way in which Rancière once described the necessity of a critical transition from archipolitics to metapolitics, we can now begin to point to the transition from a metapolitics to an anarchist politics of resistance. Kropotkin's conceptualization of the history of politics as

⁴⁸² Rudolph Rocker, *Anarcho-Syndicalism*, 31.

⁴⁸³ Peter Kropotkin, *Modern Science and Anarchism*, 176.

⁴⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 178.

⁴⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 178.

the ongoing struggle between two differing currents provides us with a preliminary framework for a new theory regarding the domain of the political, which transcends what I previously outlined in terms of the primacy of government. It is precisely by understanding the conflict between the principle of governance and the figure of anarchy which resists and revolts against the archipolitical that anarchists claim calls for a redefinition of politics as that which exposes itself as an ongoing war between the state and the non-state. At the same time, however, insofar as the political cannot be reduced to the paradigm of government, what is equally important for Kropotkin is how the historical substance which composes and makes possible the anarchist tendency that lies “in opposition to the governing hierarchic conception and tendency.”⁴⁸⁶ If the authoritarian current is manifest in terms of the historical appearance of the state and the paradigm of government, what then composes the anarchist tendency is animated and made possible, as Kropotkin importantly argues, “by the means of which the masses *resisted* the encroachments of the conquerors and the power-seeking minorities” (my emphasis).⁴⁸⁷

Resistance for Kropotkin is the substance inherent to the historical tendency toward the principle of non-governance, and is therefore one of the central components of anarchist theory attempts to elaborate at its very basis. Thus when Kropotkin claims that anarchism begins with an analysis of tendencies in opposition to that state, he writes that these tendencies are born in the tendencies that “enabled” the popular movements “to *resist* the encroachments upon their life [from those] who conquered them” (my emphasis).⁴⁸⁸ Furthermore in tracing the further history of revolt against the principle of governance, Kropotkin maintains that the historical tendencies toward non-governance “were all the outcome of the same *resistance* to the growing power of the few” (my emphasis).⁴⁸⁹ In other words, if the authoritarian tendency is made manifest by the historical appearance of the state and the paradigm of government, the opposing tendency finds its ultimate expression in movements of resistance against the primacy of government. Kropotkin’s analysis not only centralizes the concept of resistance as a key

⁴⁸⁶ Peter Kropotkin, “Anarchism,” 165.

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid, 165.

⁴⁸⁸ Peter Kropotkin, “Modern Science and Anarchism,” 181-182.

⁴⁸⁹ Ibid, 182.

component of the political, but in doing so also maintains that the analysis of resistance gives us a new way to rethink the very basis of political philosophy. It is with the distinction between the political as *archē* and the political as a paradigm of resistance that anarchist theory proposes an entirely different terrain from which to rethink the history of the political.

The way in which Kropotkin centralizes the concept of resistance as the basis for an anarchist philosophy of the political is not isolated to his own works. In a fascinating passage from *The Individual, Society, and the State*, Benjamin Tucker amplifies Kropotkin's logic to suggest that the defining feature of the political lies in formulating a key distinction between the principle of governance and anarchy, whereby the possibility of developing a new philosophy of politics hinges upon the question of resistance. What is of key importance, however, is that by articulating a clear distinction between two conflicting political spheres Tucker begins to redefine both anarchism and the question of politics in terms of a critical theory of resistance. For Tucker, the political sphere of governance is characterised through a dual essence of aggression and invasion; "[a]ggression, invasion, government," Tucker claims, are "inter-convertible terms."⁴⁹⁰ Thus for Tucker,

the essence of government is control, or the attempt to control. He who attempts to control another is a governor, and aggressor, and invader...On the other hand, he who resists another's attempt to control is not an aggressor, an invader, a governor, but simply a defender, a protector, and the nature of such resistance is not changed whether...one declines to obey an oppressive law, or by one man by all men, as when a subject people rises against a despot...The distinction between invasion and resistance, between government and defense is vital. Without it there can be no valid philosophy of politics.⁴⁹¹

Like Kropotkin, Tucker understands the history of the political in terms of an ongoing and irreducible struggle between the principle of government and the historical paradigm of resistance. Yet, Tucker's work makes another important contribution that is in every

⁴⁹⁰ Benjamin Tucker, "The Individual, Society and the State", in *Individual Liberty: Selected Writings* (New York: The Revisionist Press, 1972), 22.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid*, 22.

way essential to rethinking an anarchist theory of the political. As found in the passage above, Tucker posits a vital distinction between “government” and “resistance” as itself the condition of possibility for a critical philosophy of politics as such. Given, as we have seen, that the political cannot be reduced to the history of the archipolitical, the “vital” distinction Tucker posits between the principle of “government” and the paradigm of “resistance” is itself what makes possible an anarchist hypothesis of the political. Anarchism, according to Tucker, can thus be distinguished philosophically from other political theories, not simply as the rejection of the orthodox claims made for the legitimacy of state power, but as a historical theory of resistance to the principle of government. Crucially, however, by redefining politics from the point of view of resistance to the archipolitical, Tucker additionally defines anarchism in relation to the fundamental political paradigm of resistance.

It is precisely because Kropotkin and Tucker take up the analysis of movements of resistance that reinforce the tendency toward non-governance as the critical turning point from which to develop the primary philosophical basis of anarchist political theory, that he can be seen as gesturing toward a fundamentally different theory of the political—indeed, an anarchist hypothesis of the political from which the concept of resistance is its locus. In outlining the historical origins of the state, what is at stake for anarchists is the analysis of the tendencies in history which become manifest in movements of resistance against the state and the exercise of government. In this way, resistance, for anarchists, acts as the critical axiom from which to reread the history of the political; *resistance is inscribed into the history of the political, and its permanence is attested to by the ongoing struggle between two dominant tendencies that compose the antagonistic substance of the political—the authoritarian principle which assumes the form of government as its domain and culminates in the modern sovereign state, and the anti-authoritarian anarchist principle toward non-governance.* In other words, *resistance is the critical framework, or principle of intelligibility which reveals the domain of the political as a topology of agonistic struggle.* It is precisely because anarchist political theorists posit resistance to the principle of governance as both the basis from which anarchist philosophy begins, as well as the central component from which to reread the history of

politics, that the political theory of anarchism fundamentally gestures toward a new understanding of the political situated at the horizon of the state.

Taking Kropotkin's interpretation of history of politics as the critical turning point from which we might begin to transcend not just the Aristotelian and Schmittian paradigms of government and state sovereignty, but also the Marxist paradigm of class struggle, I have outlined preliminary anarchist approach to the political, in which the concept of resistance is inextricably bound and gives meaning to the possibility rethinking the political at the horizon of the state and the exercise of power as government. Furthermore, as a central component within the history of anarchist thought, resistance is not only that which makes possible a form of politics situated outside of the state, but also that which makes possible a vital transformation in one's life and conditions. It is in this regard that Emma Goldman, like Kropotkin and Tucker, seeks to further develop anarchism in relation to the elaboration of a form of politics as resistance. Anarchism, according to Goldman, should not be understood as an ideal view of a future stateless and classless society to come, but as the development of movements of resistance manifest at the horizon of the state. "Anarchism," Goldman therefore writes,

is not a theory of the future to be realized through divine inspiration. It is a living force in the affairs of our life, constantly creating new conditions...Anarchism therefore stands for direct action, the open defiance of, and resistance to, all laws and restrictions, economic, social, and moral. But defiance and resistance are illegal. Therein lies the salvation of man.⁴⁹²

Here, Goldman importantly defines anarchism in relation to the critical question of resistance. For Goldman, then, rather than defining and outlining the principles for the possibility of an anarchist society to come, anarchism is instead first and foremost a theory of resistance wherein the praxis revolt is the condition of possibility for a transformation in life. As a theory of living resistance, anarchism is what opens the space of politics beyond and against the history of governmentality. Indeed, a core problem central to the terrain of the postanarchist and metapolitical turns is thinking through a

⁴⁹² Emma Goldman, "Anarchism: What it really Stands for Anarchy," in *Anarchism and Other Essays*, ed. Hippolyte Havel (New York: Serenity Publishing, 2009), 44-45.

redefinition of the political from the point of view of resistance rather than from the perspective of political power. Yet, in Goldman's definition we also find that resistance opens a real political possibility; resistance is not only the central component from which to rethink politics outside of the paradigm of government, but also that which makes possible the creation of "new conditions"—that is resistance is the form of politics that renders transformation possible. This is why in a separate work, Goldman elevates and centralizes the concept of resistance as the ultimate horizon of anarchist politics: "resistance to tyranny" according to Goldman "is man's highest ideal."⁴⁹³ Following Goldman in this way, we can conclude that resistance to the exercise of government not only forms the basis of an anarchist politics, but also an anarchist hypothesis of the political animated by the history of resistance as such.

1.6 Conclusion: Towards an Anarchist Hypothesis of the Political

Although the paradigm of government has retained a certain privileged sense of primacy within the history of political theory, the goal of this chapter has been to reintroduce anarchist political theory in terms of that which posits and turns upon a unique hypothesis of the political from the perspective of resistance. If political theory is to escape the paradigm of *archē*, which has hitherto remained the dominant critical framework and condition of possibility for political theory as such, what was ultimately at stake was to outline the ways in which anarchist political theory requires, and even demands, an alternative hypothesis, or critical framework for a theory of the political that transcends the dominance of the Aristotelian and Schmittian paradigms of the political. Unlike the political theories of Aristotle and Schmitt, where politics is both derived and determined by the first principle and logic of the *archē*, it is my contention that a critical conceptualization of anarchy designates an opposing theory of the political in which politics disorders the order, logic, and sovereign authority of the *archē*; anarchy designates a radical disordering or rupture with the logic of the *archē*. In this regard, I

⁴⁹³ Emma Goldman, "The Psychology of Political Violence," in *Anarchism and Other Essays* ed. Hippolyte Havel (New York: Serenity Publishing, 2009), 70.

maintained that with a critical conception of anarchy—as the principle that makes possible the disturbance of the logic of the *archē*, as well as the historical principle of intelligibility of the political as such—anarchist political theory posits a more consistent way of rethinking the domain of the political and the question of politics as proposed in the postanarchist and meta-political traditions. Furthermore, with reference to Tiqqun, Kropotkin, and others I demonstrated through an unorthodox reading of the concept of anarchy in Hobbes that history of the state is simultaneously parallel with the history of anarchy—the counter-historical tendency toward non-governance as manifest in the politics of civil war. Here we have seen how the permanence of civil war amongst the domain to which the political refers and consists means that the history of the political can be interpreted as an agonistic dimension of struggle in which resistance comes to mark the constituent component of the political as such. We can now add that both critical conceptions of anarchy ultimately turn upon a unique theory of resistance that motivates and animates an anarchist conception of the political as such. Following Tucker, we have seen how an anarchist theory of the political turns upon a vital distinction between the exercise of government and the counter-historical movements of resistance, and in Kropotkin how this distinction means that the term politics designates an irreconcilable struggle, or permanent war between the techniques of government exercised within a state and the counter-historical movements of resistance. In other words, if the goal of radical political thought is to affirm politics against the history of the archipolitical, the question of resistance as invoked and utilized within anarchism can be seen, I maintain, as an effective way of engaging with this problem—that is, a retheorization of a form of politics situated at a distance from the state, hinges upon the question of resistance as uniquely posed within the anarchist tradition.

With the critical question of resistance designating the horizon from which to rethink the political in radically new ways, this chapter was set to characterize the turn toward anarchism in political theory in order to create the critical framework from which to orient and situate Foucault's work within the history of anarchist thought in a way that still needs to be explored today. While Foucault is often credited for developing an analytic of power, it is this very persistence of power that not only pushes Foucault toward rethinking the conditions, origins and principles of legitimacy of political power,

but also a theory of resistance that informs his analytics of power and the political as such. As we will see, through the technical vocabulary of a critical conceptualization of resistance, Foucault's project works toward reversing the general tenets of political theory in a distinct manner that is consistent with the history of anarchist political theory as outlined throughout this chapter. Posing the problem of resistance against the history of governmentality not only seeks to expose, for Foucault, the ontological and political principles that continue to sustain Western political practices but, more importantly, attempts to open a space for political praxis in which the very notion of resistance becomes central as an operative force of politics. Although the concept of resistance enters Foucault's critical lexicon later than the concept of power, it nonetheless forms the framework from which he begins to think through the general problematics of power, the political, and the exercise of governmentality. Rather than crediting Foucault with developing a philosophical concept of power, what is crucial about Foucault's work is that he introduces the concept of resistance into the field of politics and political philosophy in radically new ways consistent with the turn toward anarchism.

As I will demonstrate in the following chapter, it is with Foucault that we can begin to more thoroughly engage with the task of rethinking an anarchist hypothesis of the political on condition of resistance in a more consistent manner. What is at stake in such a line of thought is not simply the affirmation of an anarchist politics beyond the state and the exercise of government, but the affirmation of a theory of resistance central to formulating an alternative hypothesis of the political situated at the horizon of the state and the exercise of government. While Foucault explicitly situates his work in relation to the complexities of governmentality as the site for political and philosophical problems, what is crucial in Foucault's work is how he simultaneously reveals and posits an alternative theory of politics in which the permanence of resistance is what designates the specificity of the political. In reconceptualising the political as a space marked by the permanent presence of resistance, Foucault reveals that resistance exceeds the operability of power, thus opening it up to a horizon beyond itself. As I hope to articulate, this conception of resistance provides a framework that allows me to further explore the terrain between Foucault, the politics of resistance, and anarchism in the chapters that follow. Taking Foucault's philosophy as exemplary of the attempt to affirm a theory of

the political which takes resistance as its constituent component, I argue in the following chapter that this alternative view of politics and the political as elaborated by Foucault through the unique concept of what he refers to as “critique,” corresponds with a different conceptualization of both the terms of the political and of transformative resistance, which, in turn, redefines the spacing of the political as the spacing where power coincides with the fundamental truth of its own resistance, a form of resistance outlined by Foucault as an “art of not being governed.”⁴⁹⁴

⁴⁹⁴ Michel Foucault, “What is Critique?”, 45.

Chapter 3

3 An Anarchist Hypothesis of the Political: Foucault, Critique and the Art of Not Being Governed

If it is true that the set of relations of force in a given society constitutes the domain of the political... To say that 'everything is political' is to affirm this ubiquity of relations of force and their immanence in a political field; but this is to give oneself a task, which as yet has scarcely even been outlined, of disentangling this indefinite knot...Political Analysis and criticism have in large measure still to be invented—so too have the strategies which will make it possible to modify the relations of force, to co-ordinate them in such a way that such a modification is possible and can be inscribed into reality. That is to say, the problem is not so much that of defining a political 'position' (which is to choose from a pre-existing set of possibilities) but to imagine and bring into being new schemas of politicization. If 'politicization' means falling back on ready-made choices and institutions, then the effort of analysis involved in uncovering the relations of force and mechanisms of power is not worthwhile. To the vast new techniques of power correlated with multinational economies and bureaucratic States, one must oppose a politicization which will take new forms.⁴⁹⁵

--Michel Foucault

The previous chapter sought to reintroduce anarchism as a distinct political theory that turns upon an alternative theory of the political through the concept of resistance. Focusing on a critical theory of anarchism, the previous chapter gestured toward taking the concept of anarchy as the central component from which a new theory of the political might begin, but also how this retheorization of the political turns upon the unique question of resistance. One of the central problems, then, essential to anarchism is not only a theory of the political situated at the horizon of the state and the paradigm of government, but also a reconceptualization of a corresponding theory of politics in which resistance to the archipolitical designates the central component of an anarchic conception of the political as such. In other words, it is my contention that in anarchism it is a theory of resistance, and not that of an *oikonomia*, that forms the principle from which the history of politics can be reread as an agonistic field of struggle with power exercised as government. What is thus at stake in this trajectory is not simply the

⁴⁹⁵ Michel Foucault, "The History of Sexuality, an Interview with Lucette Fins," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings: 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 189-190.

affirmation of an anarchist politics outside and against the state, but the affirmation of a critical theory of resistance essential to rethinking the political anarchically. Together, these two ideas—that is, an anarchic conception of the political and the elaboration of a corresponding form of politics as resistance—form the locus of what I hold to be the essential task for political theory consequent upon the return of anarchism. If political philosophy is to escape the paradigm of government, which has hitherto remained the dominant critical framework and condition of possibility for political theory as such, what is required, and even demanded, is first an anarchist hypothesis of the political in which the unique question of resistance designates the principle of intelligibility from which to reread the history of politics. As I will argue throughout this chapter, this is precisely the position Foucault continuously elaborates throughout his work. In this regard, it is my contention in this chapter that such contemporary developments in political theory not only open unexplored possibilities for a continued retheorization of anarchism, but also the critical framework from which to rethink and orient Foucault's often contested theory of resistance within this tradition.

Throughout his collected works, Foucault consistently argues that it is inefficacious and unproductive to reduce a study of the political and the coinciding question of politics to a theory of political power. Consequent, or turning upon, a critical reevaluation of the problem of government, this is why in the first epigraph above Foucault claims that political theory is therefore faced with a “task” that has “scarcely even been outlined.” Situated amongst what was elucidated in chapter one as the core crisis of political philosophy—that is, the synthesis between the domain of the political and the first principle of an originary *archē*—Foucault importantly suggests that what must be at stake is “disentangling this indefinite knot.” Indeed, the critical task Foucault assigns to political theory in 1976, is precisely what is currently being elaborated in the metapolitical and anarchist turns in political theory. Anticipating, then, several of the debates in political theory outlined in chapter one, Foucault importantly suggests two ways in which to “bring into being new schemas of politicization”—indeed two general problematics—which both align his thought with anarchism, while formulating a unique, yet unthought, critical theory of resistance that will be the focus of this chapter.

First, “political analysis and criticism,” Foucault argues, must be reinvented: “to the vast techniques of power...one must oppose a politicization that will take new forms.”⁴⁹⁶ This is to say that political theory, according to Foucault, must be redesigned in such a way that it cannot be reduced to the logic of the *archē*—a specific rationale of government traditionally considered primary with respect to the domain of the political. For Foucault, then, against the theories and practices which locate the political at the intersection between power exercised as government and state sovereignty, what must be at stake is the development of a new, opposing theoretical framework of the political. Indeed, as I will argue throughout this chapter, it is this fundamental retheorization of the political that underlies Foucault’s methodological approach to philosophy and the history of political thought, and as such creates the critical framework from which to situate the trajectory of his collected works within the tradition of anarchism. Additionally, alongside this reinvention of political analysis, Foucault claims that what must be equally rethought is the question of resistance, or the “strategies which will make it possible to modify the relations of force,” and inscribe these transformations into reality. It is exactly within this critical framework—this double move which at once invokes a rethinking of the political situated at the horizon of the state, as well as the question of a form of politics elaborated as resistance—that this chapter will demonstrate the ways in which Foucault intervenes in the history of political theory by radically rethinking the history of politics in such a way that resistance designates the constituent principle of the political.

Traditionally, the history of archic political thought and practice has had the effect of neutralizing and minimizing the character of resistance within the history of the political.⁴⁹⁷ Foucault, however, begins from the opposite position; rather than taking

⁴⁹⁶ Ibid, 190.

⁴⁹⁷ For an early example regarding the ways in which the notion of resistance has been traditionally overlooked or excluded from political theory see: book 5, chapters 1-12 of Aristotle’s *Politics*. Here Aristotle outlines both the cause and prevention of revolutions under democracies, oligarchies, aristocracies and tyranny. Indeed, in chapters 5-12 Aristotle goes to great lengths in order to demonstrate how each of the differing typologies of governments and states might overcome and prevent resistance. Additionally, in chapter 21 of *The Leviathan*, Hobbes argues that resistance is what disrupts the unity of sovereign power and therefore must be avoided at all costs. According to Hobbes “to resist the Sword of the Common-wealth...no man hath liberty...because such liberty takes away from the Sovereign, the means of protecting us...and is therefore destructive to the very essence of government” (152).

resistance as a minor term within the history of political theory, Foucault valorizes it as the key concept that reveals the specificity of power, politics, and the political as such. Turning to Foucault, then, I want to suggest that a rethinking of the question of anarchism can, in part, be accomplished through a study of how his theory of resistance reveals a radically new perspective from which the history of the political can be interpreted anarchically. Yet, at the same time as Foucault reformulates the terms of the political on condition of the question of resistance, he does so not simply to argue that the political might be rethought in terms of a reductive dialectic that takes the form of government/resistance, but that a rethinking of the terms of the political requires a radically different framework that affords primacy to the question of resistance. If as we have seen, that one of the central tasks of contemporary political theory is to reconsider the domain of the political in such a way that it cannot be reduced to the problematic of government, then what is needed vitally is an altogether different analytic framework and methodology for the terms of the political which not only include resistance as a key component but, in doing so, also reframes the political from the point of view of resistance.

It is at the cusp—indeed the precise intersection—of these two problematics that I suggest a fundamental rereading of Foucault’s thought in order to demonstrate the ways in which his work increasingly gestures towards new “schemas of politicization” situated in the trajectory between the question of resistance and the history of anarchism. Utilizing the critical space afforded by the anarchist turn in contemporary political thought, this chapter will begin to discuss Foucault’s contributions to anarchism and the politics of resistance, while at the same time demonstrating the ways in which it is through the questions of anarchism and resistance that help facilitate a new reading of Foucault’s oeuvre traditionally overlooked by scholars. More specifically, this chapter introduces the significance of the question of resistance to Foucault’s thought by outlining its intersection with the coinciding concept of what he refers to as “critique,” a methodological praxis underlying his studies of philosophy and politics. In this regard, it is my contention in this chapter that the idea of “critique” reveals a new perspective from which the concept of resistance can be highlighted as the key term around which Foucault’s project revolves. At the same time, however, it is this concept of “critique”

and its relation to the question of resistance that reveals for Foucault what I refer as an *anarchist hypothesis of the political*, in which the concept and practice of resistance comes to designate the agonistic dimension specific to politics. Although the concept of “critique” is often invoked in several of Foucault’s texts, lectures and interviews, it is most clearly elaborated in three key texts. The concept of “critique” is first developed in a posthumously published transcript of a lecture given at the Société de Philosophie Française in 1978 titled “What is Critique?”. In this lecture, what Foucault takes as the basis of “critique” is shown to originate in the counter-historical practices of resistance to governmentality. Second, Foucault addresses the importance of “critique” in the first lecture from *The Government of Self and Others*, and outlines how the idea accounts for his own methodological approach to both political theory and philosophy.⁴⁹⁸ Finally, in “What is Enlightenment,” first published in 1984, Foucault conceptualizes “critique” in terms of an ethos of resistance developed in response to the political problematics of authority and obedience.⁴⁹⁹ What is crucial is not simply the thematic overlap between these texts, but rather how each situates the notion of “critique” in relation to Foucault’s genealogical histories of governmentality, while further elaborating the ways in which the concept also designates the active component from which to rethink the history of the political from the perspective of resistance.

Several critics and scholars have offered extensive studies regarding the significance and use of the concept of “critique” as it is developed over the course of Foucault’s thought. The significance of the concept of “critique” in Foucault’s thought has not gone unnoticed by his biographers, and both James Miller⁵⁰⁰ and Didier Eribon⁵⁰¹ have dedicated thorough discussions pertaining to the concept of “critique” as it develops throughout his collected works. Highlighting the importance of this concept, Christopher Penfield more recently writes that “critique is the philosophical mode of reflection that

⁴⁹⁸ Michel Foucault, *The Government of the Self and Others. Lectures at the Collège de France 1982-1983*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 1-40.

⁴⁹⁹ Michel Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?” in *The Foucault Reader*, trans. Catherine Porter and ed. Paul Rabinow. (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), 32-50.

⁵⁰⁰ James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1993), 302-305.

⁵⁰¹ Didier Eribon, *Michel Foucault*, trans. Betsy Wing (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 1991), 221.

best characterizes Foucault's thought."⁵⁰² Since "critique" exemplifies Foucault's approach to philosophy, scholars and critical commentators have sought to engage with and draw connections between the notion of "critique" and several other key concepts or general thematics spread throughout his works. Drawing a certain correspondence between "critique" and other critical concepts such as "subjectivity,"⁵⁰³ "practices of the self,"⁵⁰⁴ and "ethics,"⁵⁰⁵ scholars of Foucault have sought to demonstrate the importance of the concept of "critique" across the wide, diverse spectrum of his thought and work. Furthermore, theorists as diverse as Jon Simons,⁵⁰⁶ David Ingram,⁵⁰⁷ Todd May,⁵⁰⁸ David Couzens-Hoy,⁵⁰⁹ and Edward McGushin⁵¹⁰ have invoked the concept of "critique" as way to reveal how Foucault's work should be understood within the critical and philosophical tradition initially arising with Kant and the Enlightenment. At stake for these writers is how the relation Foucault stages between "critique" and the critical tradition of Kant helps to locate a certain thematic link between the differing periods of his collected thought. Others such as McGrusin,⁵¹¹ Diana Taylor,⁵¹² and Thomas Lemke⁵¹³ further

⁵⁰² Christopher Penfield, "Critique," in *The Cambridge Foucault Lexicon*, eds. Leonard Lawlor and John Nale (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 87.

⁵⁰³ Here Hays draws a crucial connection between critique, the study of subjectivity and the potentiality for agential transformation.

⁵⁰⁴ Diana Taylor, "Practices of the Self," in *Michel Foucault: Key Concepts*, ed. Diana Taylor (Durham: Acumen Publishing Limited, 2011), 173-186. In her analysis of the relation between "critique" and what Foucault referred to as "technologies" or "practices of the self," Taylor maintains that Foucault's use of "critique may loosen the relationship between truth and power that characterizes modern subjectivation" (174). In Taylor's conception, "critique," therefore has an emancipatory function as it develops in Foucault's thought.

⁵⁰⁵ David Ingram, "Foucault and Habermas," in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, ed. Gary Cutting (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 257-262.

⁵⁰⁶ Jon Simons, *Foucault and the Political* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 51. Here Simons draws a direct connection between Foucault's political theory and Kant's critical project through an affinity with the concept of "critique" in which "critique" helps to determine the limits of political power. Drawing an explicit connection between Foucault's political thought and Kant's, Simons' writes: "Foucault conceives of political philosophy along Kantian lines, as a philosophical project to determine the proper limits of political power."

⁵⁰⁷ David Ingram, "Foucault and Habermas," 266.

⁵⁰⁸ Todd May, *The Philosophy of Foucault* (Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 22-23.

⁵⁰⁹ David Couzens-Hoy, *Critical Resistance: From Poststructuralism to Post-Critique* (Cambridge: MIT University Press, 2004), 90-92.

⁵¹⁰ Edward McGushin, *Foucault's Askēsis: An Introduction to the Philosophical Life* (Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 2007), 275-280.

⁵¹¹ Ibid 278-286.

⁵¹² Diana Taylor, "Practices of the Self," 178-180.

⁵¹³ Thomas Lemke, *Foucault, Governmentality and Critique* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2011).

argue that the concept of “critique” ought to be understood in relation and response to the rise of governmentalization and Foucault’s studies of “governmentality.” Additionally, focusing on the problematic of government and the coinciding emancipatory aspects of Foucault’s genealogy of “critique,” theorists such as Johanna Oksala⁵¹⁴ and Couzens-Hoy have sought to draw connections between the elaboration of “critique” and the development of a theory of emancipatory freedom in Foucault’s thought and work, whereby the concept of “critique” comes to mark “a crucial condition of freedom.”⁵¹⁵ In this regard, while scholars have highlighted the importance of the concept of “critique” in Foucault, while further tracing the ways in which the notion of “critique” helps form connections between other critical concepts, it is my contention that the concept most directly helps to introduce and elaborate a specific correspondence with the theory of resistance underlying his respective studies of power, politics, and governmentality.

Taking the specific correspondence between governmentality and the concept of “critique” as one of the key turning points in Foucault’s thought, the fundamental relation established between “critique” and resistance has not gone unnoticed, and several theorists have additionally outlined certain connecting point between the two terms. Ingram, for example, writes that “critique” in Foucault “is nothing more than an embodied exemplification of virtuous resistance.”⁵¹⁶ Similarly, Judith Butler argues that with the notion of “critique,” the question of resistance is retheorized by Foucault in terms of an ethical “practice of virtue.”⁵¹⁷ In his text *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, Kelly contends that “Foucault depicts critique as a specific counter-part to the modern art of government,” and as such that “critique” functions as a theoretical continuation of the problem of resistance as developed in his thought.⁵¹⁸ Furthermore, Andrew Cutrofello’s text *Discipline and Critique* and David Couzens-Hoy’s *Critical Resistance* are both indispensable references for working out the relation between the general problematic of governmentality, the rise of “critique” and the turn toward the study of resistance in Foucault’s thought and work. With the concept of “critique” acting

⁵¹⁴ Johanna Oksala, *Foucault on Freedom*, 8.

⁵¹⁵ David Couzens-Hoy, *Critical Resistance: From Poststructuralism to Post-Critique*, 92.

⁵¹⁶ David Ingram, “Foucault and Habermas,” 268.

⁵¹⁷ Judith Butler, “What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault’s Virtue,” 3.

⁵¹⁸ Mark G.E. Kelly, *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, 130.

as the theoretical locus from which Foucault attempts to transcend the problematic of governmentality, Couzens-Hoy maintains that his thought turns upon the development of a “social ontology of resistance” that is “made manifest through a genealogical critique.”⁵¹⁹ In this regard, Couzens-Hoy further argues that with the concept of critique “Foucault recognizes that he has to explain the conditions for the possibility of resistance, and he does so by building resistance into power relations from the start.”⁵²⁰ In outlining a unique relationship between Kant, Foucault, and the problem of resistance, Cutrofello further suggests that it is with the notion of critique that Foucault begins to think through the relation between resistance and ethics, and thus maintains that Foucault’s retheorization of Kant’s “categorical imperative could provide Foucauldian critique with an ethical basis for a politics of resistance.”⁵²¹ As we will see in a later chapter, Foucault’s engagement with the critical tradition of Kant and the coinciding problematic of “critique” helps to determine a specific connection between the problematic of resistance initially sketched in *The History of Sexuality* and his turn toward ethics in his final works. What is particularly insightful about these accounts is that each locates the concept of “critique” within the context of an extended discussion of Foucault’s often contested theory of resistance, while also suggesting how “critique” might designate a unique basis that allows for the elusive character of Foucauldian resistance to be attenuated. While these theorists have made significant contributions to the study of resistance in Foucault through its relation to the concept of “critique,” the fundamental relation Foucault establishes not only between critique and resistance, but also the question of politics has nevertheless only been scarcely outlined. In other words, what requires further exploration is the precise manner by which Foucault locates the question of politics at the intersection between his concept of “critique” and his theory of resistance.

In situating the question of politics between the notions of “critique” and resistance, my own approach is set to demonstrate the ways in which the elaboration of the concept of “critique” and its relation to the general problematic of resistance develops

⁵¹⁹ David Couzens-Hoy, *Critical Resistance: From Poststructuralism to Post-Critique*, 82.

⁵²⁰ Ibid, 81

⁵²¹ Andrew Cutrofello, *Discipline and Critique: Kant, Poststructuralism and the Problem of Resistance* (New York: Suny Press, 1994), 84.

a fundamental affinity with anarchism, and as such ought to be situated more firmly within an anarchist framework in order to fully appreciate its political and philosophical importance. While the above theorists have highlighted a fundamental relation between “critique” and resistance, several of these theorists nevertheless tend to deny a possible relation between Foucault’s concept of critique and the history of anarchism. In this regard, while I affirm an essential nexus between the concepts of “critique” and resistance, I argue that with the concept of “critique” Foucault locates a theory of resistance at the basis of his distinct understanding of politics, while simultaneously developing a unique affinity with anarchism. More specifically, it is my contention in this chapter that the relation Foucault stages between “critique” and resistance ultimately reveals the basis for an anarchist hypothesis of the political in which resistance designates the constituent component of a form of politics irreducible to the logic of the archē. In other words, what is crucial in the relation between “critique” and resistance is an alternative basis from which to rethink the question of politics anarchically.

In what follows, what is at stake in staging an intersection between Foucault and anarchist political theory is first to demonstrate how with the concept of “critique” his work increasingly builds upon and develops an alternative theory of the political that turns upon the question of resistance. Rather than beginning with the question of power or governmentality (neither of which can be neglected in Foucault’s thought), by turning toward the concept of “critique” I want to suggest an alternative way of thinking through what it might mean to “cut off the king’s head” in political theory, as Foucault was often apt to suggest.⁵²² As we will see, what Foucault elaborates in terms of “critique” has serious implications for both philosophy and political theory; philosophically the concept of “critique” begins to develop in regard to a permanent struggle against the problem of authority, while politically the term designates a form of politics animated by movements of resistance to governmentality. Although the 1978 lecture is often overlooked by scholars in comparison to the 1984 lecture, between the two Foucault begins to incorporate the concept of “critique” into his general lexicon in such a way that both provides a rare overview of the development of his thought in relation to the question of resistance, as well as a critical commentary regarding the development of a new critical

⁵²² Michel Foucault, “Truth and Power,” 122.

framework from which the terms of the political are rethought anarchically. Indeed, with the notion of “critique” both philosophy and politics, as Foucault importantly suggests in the 1978 lecture, develop in relation to, and are linked by, what he refers to as the “art of not being governed,” or a fundamental “decision not to be governed.”⁵²³ Inasmuch as Foucault takes this “art of not being governed” as the very basis for what he refers to as “critique,” I argue that his genealogical study of the critical attitude forms a direct alliance with anarchist political theory that ought not to be overlooked in Foucauldian scholarship. If the notion of “critique” in Foucault’s thought can be understood, as one commentator suggests, in terms of a general “lens for viewing the coherence, stakes, and trajectory of his work as whole,”⁵²⁴ it is my contention that between the concept of “critique” and the coinciding form of politics expressed as an “art of not being governed” Foucault formulates a hidden critical locus from which to redefine the terms of the political not from the point of view of political power, but from the complexities of the movements of resistance parallel, yet heterogeneous, to the historical manifestation of governmentality. At the same time, as I will demonstrate throughout this chapter, the notion of “critique” functions in Foucault’s thought as an internal methodological framework that binds together the larger trajectory of his collected works in relation to the question of resistance. With these two ideas in mind, this chapter argues that within the critical and methodological approaches to the fundamental reanalysis of power and genealogical approach to the history of politics and governmentality, Foucault begins to develop and posit an anarchist theory of the political through the concept of “critique” that turns upon the question of resistance instead of the paradigm of government, and as such allows for a critical transcendence of the Aristotelian and Schmittian paradigms.

3.1 Anarchaeology: Foucault’s Critical Anarchist Methodology

Let us, therefore, start with an outline of an anarchistic methodology...

--Paul Feyerabend⁵²⁵

⁵²³ Michel Foucault, “What is Critique?”, 44; 66.

⁵²⁴ Christopher Penfield, “Critique,” 87.

⁵²⁵ Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchist theory of Knowledge* (London: Verso, 1988), 13.

Before attending to an analysis of the concept of “critique,” it is first necessary to briefly outline a preliminary connection between anarchism and Foucault’s methodology that will act as the turning point from which to stage a fundamental intersection between the concept of “critique” and the politics of resistance. In terms of his methodological approach to the study of the political, what Foucault shares with anarchism is the refusal to presuppose the primacy of government or sovereign power as the principle from which to either understand the question of power or to read the history of politics. This is why Foucault famously criticizes the history of political theory insofar as it “has never had another system of representation, of formulation, and of analysis of power than that of the law, the system of law.”⁵²⁶ At stake here for Foucault is the idea that the state and sovereign power can no longer act as the theoretical framework for a critical analysis of power and the activity of politics. Thus, as Foucault maintains in the January fourteenth lecture from *Society Must Be Defended*, “[w]e have to study power outside of the model of Leviathan, outside the field delineated by juridical sovereignty and the institution of the state.”⁵²⁷ Since the mid 1970s, many of Foucault’s major texts, interviews and lectures are critical responses to this conceptual impasse. In studying the question of politics and the analysis of power against its basis in the juridical form of state sovereign power, Foucault highlights an important way to detach ourselves from the traditional discourses that locate the question of politics within the domain of the state—that is, like many anarchists Foucault attempts to rethink the political at the horizon of the state and the paradigm of government, and as such reveals a form of politics that is genuinely without an archē.

As we will see, while Foucault begins to rethink an alternative basis for political theory irreducible to both government and sovereignty, what is particularly significant is the specific correspondence he develops between the attempt to affirm an anarchic politics that does not culminate in the practice of government and the historico-political

⁵²⁶ Qtd. in Arnold Davidson, introduction to *Society Must Be Defended. Lectures at the College De France, 1975-1976*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), xvii. This passage is taken from a lecture Foucault gave in Brazil in 1976, originally published as Michel Foucault, “Les Mailles du Pouvoir,” in *Dits et écrits*, vol. 4, p. 186.

⁵²⁷ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 34.

question of resistance. In other words, the essential thrust of Foucault's project is that the search for a politics irreducible to governmentality cannot be divorced from the critical question of resistance, and yet, precisely because of this, what is required by Foucault is a new political methodology that takes resistance as its constituent component. Indeed, insofar as the "set of force relations" as Foucault suggests "constitutes the domain of the political" what must be fundamentally rethought is the way in which these force relations necessarily include resistance as a central, although historically neglected, feature of politics.⁵²⁸ This is why in his study of Foucault, Deleuze specifically traces how power relations are to be necessarily paired with the concept of resistance. In *Foucault*, Deleuze therefore writes:

There is no diagram (of power) that does not also include, besides the points which it connects up, certain relatively free or unbound points, points of creativity, change and resistance, and it is perhaps with these that we ought to begin in order to understand the whole picture.⁵²⁹

At stake for Deleuze is how the notion of resistance at once acts as the precondition of relations of power in Foucault, as well as how this analytic of power begins with a theory of resistance as its divisive focal point. Indeed, one of the points Foucault consistently emphasizes throughout his work is that his methodological approach to the study of politics and the political is not simply to be understood in terms of an alternative analytic of power, but rather as a critical theory that begins with the question of resistance as the primary focal point from which the questions of power and politics can be rethought.⁵³⁰ In this regard, it is my contention that this reconceptualization of the political from the perspective of resistance reveals a unique alliance between Foucault's thought and anarchist political theory. Thus, although Foucault often took pride in remaining politically unclassifiable,⁵³¹ and while he does often characterize his thought in relation to

⁵²⁸ Michel Foucault, "The History of Sexuality, an Interview with Lucette Fins," 189.

⁵²⁹ Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault* trans. Sean Hand (London: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), 44.

⁵³⁰ Throughout his work, Foucault often reiterates the importance of the question of methodology in his thought. Crucially, in several of these instances, Foucault emphasizes the way in which his approach to the study of power, politics and governmentality all turn upon the question of resistance as the key focal point from which such analytics of power might arise. For example, see: *The History of Sexuality*, 92-102; "Omnes es Singulatim: Toward a Critique of Political Reason," 324-325; "Questions of Method," 223-238; *On the Government of the Living*, 72-80; *Society Must Be Defended*, 5-39.

⁵³¹ See: David Macey, *The Lives of Foucault* (London: Hutchinson Press, 1993), 432.

certain problematics located within specific philosophical and political traditions as much as he often seeks to disqualify and overturn others, I want to suggest that Foucault's work not only develops an internal solidarity with anarchism through his theory of resistance, but also that anarchism marks the critical threshold from which to locate the political possibilities offered in his study of the politics of resistance as such.

Although Foucault often draws upon examples from anarchist movements as historical support for his unique approach to the studies of power, politics and governmentality, it is my contention that a preliminary outline between Foucault and the history of anarchist thought can first be made in terms of a critical methodology that takes a theory of resistance as the primary focal point required for a critical inquiry into the questions of power and politics. Perhaps the most unique and direct way Foucault formulates an affinity with anarchism in this manner arises in *On the Government of the Living* when he coins the neologism "anarchaeology" rather than "archaeology" to describe his general methodology and approach to the analytics of governmentality and politics.⁵³² As outlined in extensive detail in *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, Foucault uses the term "archaeology" to describe the ways in which his general research method is characterized by the suspension of established discourses for thinking about history and the presupposition that the typical conventions for thinking about history of ideas as such

⁵³² Michel Foucault, *On the Government of the Living*, 79. To my knowledge, Foucault only invokes uses the term "anarchaeology" in the January 30, 1980 lecture from *On the Government of the Living*. Foucault draws inspiration for the term "anarchaeology" from Paul Feyerabend's text *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchist theory of Knowledge* (London: Verso, 1988), which posits a sort of epistemological anarchism as the basic methodological framework for science and knowledge. Commenting on Feyerabend's text, Foucault claims there is "something interesting on the problem of anarchy and knowledge" within Feyerabend's work (*On the Government of the Living*, 79). While taking seriously the clarification of Foucault's methodological approach, Michel Sellenart claims in the "Course Context" following the lectures that the term "anarchaeology" should be understood "with humor" (*On the Government of the Living*, 330). Yet, given the serious manner in which Foucault attempts not only to defend the position of 'anarchy' from its detractors, but also the lengths at which he goes to describe the alliance between his own methodology and anarchism, the term ought not to be taken lightly, and further helps to outline a unique relation between Foucault and the history of anarchist political thought in new ways that has yet to be full understood. As I will argue, the position posited by the term "anarchaeology," is redeveloped under the concept of "critique" in Foucault's thought. Additionally, Feyerabend's text has more recently come to influence the anarchist turn in contemporary theory. On the recent use of Feyerabend's text and anarchist theory see: Jeff Ferrell, "Against Method, Against Authority...For Anarchy," in *Contemporary Anarchist Studies: An Introduction to Anarchy in the Academy*, eds. Randall Amster, et al. (New York: Routledge, 2009), 73-81.

should also be subject to archaeological analysis.⁵³³ For Foucault, “archaeology” shifts the critical objective of historical analysis away from what has been done in the histories of systems of thought to the set of conditions, or “discursive formations” enabling certain practices to emerge in history as such.⁵³⁴ While maintaining this critical gesture “anarchaeology,” in contrast, differs from the former term insofar as it is a philosophical attitude or way of being, distinguished from skepticism, that begins with “the non-necessity of all power of whatever kind.”⁵³⁵ Similar to his archaeological method, then, by beginning with the “non-necessity of power,” what Foucault refers to as “anarchaeology” can be understood as designating a critical methodology that suspends the established conventions for thinking about politics and the political. An anarchaeological understanding of the history of politics as such cannot therefore begin by presupposing a theory of power as the principle that gives the political its form.

In coining the term “anarchaeology,” Foucault draws inspiration from Paul Feyerabend’s 1975 text *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchist Theory of Knowledge* in which the author argues for an epistemological or “theoretical anarchism” that acts as the basic methodological approach to both “epistemology and the philosophy of science.”⁵³⁶ While Foucault’s focus is not on the problem of knowledge and epistemology, but rather on the questions of power and politics we might, following the subtitle of Feyerabend’s text, suggest that what Foucault develops under the term “anarchaeology” can better be understood as forming the basic outline for an *anarchist theory of politics and the political*. Yet, given that Foucault’s work in *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality* is generally understood by scholars as turning upon the very question and historical analysis of “power,” his statement in 1980 regarding the “non-necessity of power” appears at odds with the general thematic focus of several of his works. Yet, by taking “the non-necessity of power as a principle of intelligibility” of politics, Foucault

⁵³³ On Foucault’s use of the term archaeology and its relation to Foucault’s methodology, see: *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, 135-149.

⁵³⁴ Michel Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge and the Discourse on Language*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 2010). As used by Foucault, the term “discursive formations” suggests a historically specific rationality underpinning a system of rules of a particular society in a specific historical moment (21-78).

⁵³⁵ Michel Foucault, Michel Foucault, *On the Government of the Living*, 78.

⁵³⁶ Paul Feyerabend, *Against Method: Outline of an Anarchist Theory of Knowledge*, 9.

not only radically reframes the study of politics from a perspective that invokes anarchism as a hidden conceptual framework, but also offers a new way to read the problematic of resistance as the conceptual key to fully understanding what is at stake in a critical analytic of power and politics.⁵³⁷ Anticipating that his audience will claim that any political methodology beginning with a “non-necessity of power” necessarily invokes the concept of “anarchy,” or “anarchism,” Foucault quickly responds by affirming a possible relation between anarchism and his own methodological approach to the study of political theory.⁵³⁸ Against his potential interlocutors, Foucault maintains that: “I don’t see why the words ‘anarchy’ and ‘anarchism’ are so pejorative that the mere fact of employing them counts as triumphant discourse.”⁵³⁹ In other words, rather than immediately discounting anarchism, Foucault instead refuses to exclude a possible connection between the political implications of his work and anarchist theory. With the term “anarchaeology,” then, Foucault importantly refuses to reduce the questions of “anarchy” or “anarchism” to the pejorative sense given to the terms by most theorists, and in doing so begins to provide a rare insight into the affinity he draws between anarchism and his own thought.

After affirming a critical conception of “anarchy” (albeit hesitantly) as the basis of his own methodology, Foucault further elaborates what he means to suggest by invoking the term “anarchaeology.”⁵⁴⁰ With the method of “anarchaeology” Foucault’s first point is to demonstrate that it is not of matter of putting “non-power” or the “non-acceptability of power” at “the end of the enterprise, but rather at the beginning of the work, in the form of questioning all of the ways that power is in fact accepted.”⁵⁴¹ Rather than presupposing the primacy of the state, sovereignty, and political power as the grid

⁵³⁷ Michel Foucault, *On the Government of the Living*, 78.

⁵³⁸ Ibid, 78.

⁵³⁹ Ibid, 78.

⁵⁴⁰ Ibid, 78-79. Anticipating that members of his audience might interpret and reduce his thought to a common misunderstanding of anarchism, Foucault is hesitant to outright affirm this connection between his own thought and anarchism, and writes that although there is an explicit relation, that there is also a “certain difference” (78). Furthermore, while Foucault writes that the position he proposes “does not exclude anarchy,” but that “it does not cover the same field, and is not identified with it” (78). While Foucault is hesitant to fully affirm the connection between his work and anarchist thought, the position he adopts through the concept of “critique” is strikingly similar to what he briefly refers to here as “anarchaeology.”

⁵⁴¹ Ibid, 78.

from which to read the history of politics and political theory, Foucault argues instead for a critical framework which *begins* with the “non-acceptability of power” as the “principle of intelligibility” of a historical knowledge of politics.⁵⁴² In other words, “anarchaeology” designates a critical methodology from which the political can be rethought anarchically. Furthermore, instead of beginning with an a priori conception of power, Foucault instead argues that “[p]ower has no intrinsic legitimacy” and, as such, that it cannot therefore function as the historical condition of possibility for the emergence of the political.⁵⁴³ Foucault’s point here is that one cannot fully understand the history of politics simply by assuming the primacy of power over other determining factors. In other words, “anarchaeology” in this sense designates a strategic refusal to presuppose a theory of power in any form other than its own fundamental contingency.

Second, Foucault maintains that “anarchaeology” does not begin with the thesis that “all power is bad, but instead from the point that no power whatsoever is acceptable by right and absolutely and definitely inevitable.”⁵⁴⁴ Here, Foucault’s claim is that a historical knowledge of politics cannot begin with the a priori assumption that there must always be something akin to an inevitable, essential and acceptable form of power from which a historical knowledge of politics is made possible. In other words, it is not a theory of power, according to Foucault, that designates the principle of intelligibility for politics, but instead a position that begins from the opposite hypothesis, an opposing theory whereby an ongoing struggle with power signifies the principle from which to reread the history of political theory from the perspective of resistance. Finally, whereas Foucault is often criticized for the way in which his theory of power overrides the possibility of resistance and denies the possibility of agency,⁵⁴⁵ “anarchaeology” begins with the idea that “[i]t is the movement of freeing oneself from power,” and not that of subjection to power, “that should serve as the revealer in the transformations of the

⁵⁴² Ibid, 78.

⁵⁴³ Ibid, 77.

⁵⁴⁴ Ibid, 78.

⁵⁴⁵ One of the major issues at stake in the Foucault/Habermas debate from the 1980’s is over the question of agency. According to Habermas, since Foucault’s primary focus throughout several of his texts is the question of power, what he ultimately ends up producing is a history of the processes of subjection, rather than a critical conception of an agential subject. For a collection of essays organized around the Foucault/Habermas debate see: *Critique and Power: Recasting the Foucault/Habermas Debate*, ed. Michael Kelly (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1994).

subject.”⁵⁴⁶ In this final instance, “anarchaeology” reveals a real political possibility for Foucault; rather than a theory of politics that traces subjection to the varying practices of power, Foucault suggests to the contrary that it is through a study of resistance, or a critical inquiry into the “movement of freeing oneself from power,” that we should direct our gaze in order to understand what is ultimately at stake in the questions of power and politics. With these positions acting as the basic methodological approach to Foucault’s study of politics and the problem of governmentality, it is clear that Foucault directly draws a rare parallel between his own thought, methodology, and the political theory of anarchism. Indeed, given that Foucault often refuses to affiliate his work with any specific political positions, the way in which he aligns his thought with anarchism he should not be overlooked by his readers. As Foucault comments in *On the Government of the Living*:

You can see therefore that there is certainly some kind of relation between what is roughly called anarchy or anarchism and the methods I employ...in other words the position I adopt does not absolutely exclude anarchy—after all, once again, why would anarchy be so condemnable? Maybe it is automatically condemned only by those who assume that there must always, inevitably, essentially be something like acceptable power. So the position I am proposing does not exclude anarchy.⁵⁴⁷

Although we have seen how Foucault’s critics often invoke the concept of “anarchism” in the pejorative sense to point toward what they find as certain fundamental weaknesses in his thought, Foucault self-affirms this alliance.⁵⁴⁸ In addition to affirming anarchy as the basic methodological framework employed in his analytics of power and politics, he also points toward the way in which the concept of “anarchy” has been historically denounced by political theorists. Indeed “anarchy,” as Foucault suggests above, is most commonly condemned by those philosophers who presuppose the inevitability and acceptability of power as the proper characteristic inherent to the field of the political. Foucault, however, denies this presupposition and maintains that his own position cannot therefore

⁵⁴⁶ Ibid, 77.

⁵⁴⁷ Ibid, 78.

⁵⁴⁸ For example, see: Michael Walzer, “The Politics of Michel Foucault,” in *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, ed. D. Couzens Hoy (Oxford: Blackwell, 1986), 61.

exclude the possibility of anarchy inasmuch as it begins with the “non-necessity of power.” By affirming the place of “anarchy” within his own work, Foucault significantly begins with a critical position that offers a preliminary to transcend the Aristotelian and Schmittian paradigms of the political, thus providing a preliminary basis of an anarchist theory of politics. As Foucault importantly suggests, then:

The approach [of anarchaeology] consists in wondering...what of the subject and relations of knowledge do we dispense with when we consider no power to be founded either by right or necessity, that all power only rests on the contingency and fragility of a history, that the social contract is a bluff...and that there is no universal, immediate, and obvious right that can everywhere and always support any kind of relation of power.⁵⁴⁹

Here Foucault provides a preliminary outline of an alternative way to study the history of political theory and the coinciding problem of politics from the perspective of anarchy. Rather than beginning with an analysis of power as the key term from which to understand the political, Foucault argues that he wants to begin on the “opposite track” which, in taking the non-necessity of power as the starting point of his political theory, transcends the orthodox paradigms of political theory.⁵⁵⁰ It is this “non-necessity” of power that acts as the beginning point from which Foucault begins to posit what I will refer to throughout this chapter as an anarchist hypothesis of the political—a hypothesis that at once rethinks the domain of the political at the limit of the governmentalization of the state, and in doing so, requires a specific engagement with the question of resistance.

Although in *On the Government of the Living* Foucault draws clear connections between his work and anarchist thought, given the way in which the term “anarchaeology” makes a limited appearance in his collected thought it would nevertheless be difficult to trace Foucault’s philosophical lineage immediately to anarchism simply through this term alone, without directly ignoring or bracketing the larger critical and philosophical tradition from within which he works. Thus, in order to pinpoint and highlight what I have just outlined as a preliminary alliance between

⁵⁴⁹ Michel Foucault, *On the Government of the Living*, 77-78.

⁵⁵⁰ *Ibid*, 78.

Foucault and anarchist thought based upon his own methodological approach to the questions of power and politics, I argue that this critical framework invoked in 1980 as the method of “anarchaeology” is further developed and finds its articulation between the lectures “What is Critique?” and “What is Enlightenment?” wherein Foucault attributes the possibility of a new theory of the political beginning with the non-necessity of power to a reactivation of the concept of “critique.” Indeed, as we will see the concept of “critique” bears strikingly similar qualities to the notion of “anarchaeology” and, as such, marks an important way from which to locate Foucault’s thought within the anarchist tradition. In outlining what I find to be a key component of Foucault’s thought, what is crucial in regard to these two lectures is the way in which Foucault provides a rare self-reflexive analysis of the critical arc of his collected works in relation to the problematic of resistance, while at the same time situating his thought amongst a central political and philosophical tradition that invokes a rethinking of anarchism as the basis from which a new theory of the political might arise. As we will see, what Foucault elaborates under the notion of “critique” is best exemplified in a position that begins at the intersection between the “non-acceptability of power” and the counter-historical movements of resistance parallel to the history of governmentality.

What is at stake, therefore, in formulating a critical link between an anarchist hypothesis of the political and Foucault’s lectures “What is Critique?” and “What is Enlightenment?” is neither to ascribe a political identity to Foucault, nor to classify what is often intentionally unclassifiable. Instead, rather, what is at stake arises in the way in which what Foucault outlines in these lectures as “critique,” invokes, contributes to, and even forms an alliance with the history of anarchist theory, while at the same time helping to introduce and centralize the concept of resistance to the whole of his thought. Against, then, certain critics such as Senellart⁵⁵¹ who deny any real connection between Foucault’s methodology and anarchism, it is my contention that such a connection is indeed elaborated between the two lectures “What is Critique?” and “What is Enlightenment?” Taking note of the importance of both these texts, I argue that the framework Foucault adapts from the critical tradition of Kant and the Enlightenment

⁵⁵¹ See: Michel Senellart, “Course Context,” in Michel Foucault, *On the Government of the Living: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1979-1980*, 330.

begins to posit an anarchist hypothesis of the political that can account for the question of resistance amongst its dynamic. Focusing, then, on the ways in which the notion of “critique”—like the concept of “anarchaeology”—is vital to the ways in which Foucault hopes to rethink the history of the political from a radically new perspective, the overall goal in what follows is twofold: to first reveal the ways in which Foucault’s thought formulates a radically new methodological approach to the study of the political that elevates the notion of resistance as the vital component of the being-political of politics, while at the same time demonstrating how resistance functions, for Foucault, as the critical axis upon which his collected works turn. In this regard, rather than superimposing a pre-existing school of thought or grafting a philosophy of anarchism upon Foucault’s work, it is instead better to attend to the way in which he directly locates his general trajectory within a specific critical tradition, and then to show how this critical tradition of resistance forms the basis from which an anarchist hypothesis of the political can be elaborated.

3.2 Essays in Refusal: Critique and the Struggle Against Authority

*Critique doesn’t have to be the premise of a deduction that concludes, “this, then, is what needs to be done.” It should be an instrument for those who fight, those who resist and refuse what is. Its use should be in the processes of conflict and confrontation, essays in refusal. It doesn’t have to lay down the law for the law. It isn’t a stage in programming. It is a challenge to what is.*⁵⁵²

*After all, we are all members of the community of the governed, and thereby obliged to show mutual solidarity...The suffering of men must never be a silent residue of policy...The will of individuals must make a place for itself in a reality of which governments have attempted to reserve a monopoly for themselves, that monopoly which we need to wrest from them little by little and day by day.*⁵⁵³

--Michel Foucault

⁵⁵² Michel Foucault, “Question of Method,” in *Power. Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1997), 236.

⁵⁵³ Michel Foucault, “Confronting Governments: Human Rights,” in *Power. Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1997), 474-475.

In the opening epigraph above, Foucault offers a preliminary definition of the concept of “critique” and highlights its divisive characteristics. Being critical, according to Foucault, is not a prescriptive form of philosophical thinking, but instead an instrument of resistance, a strategic confrontation with and “challenge to what is;” being critical as such is none other than the elaboration of “essays in refusal.” Indeed, it is my contention that Foucault’s work as a whole should be understood as a collection of texts written within the context of these “essays in refusal.” Yet, in order to understand the significance of the concept of “critique” as it is developed in Foucault’s thought it is necessary to turn toward the philosophical tradition from which his use of the term is most extensively developed. In each of the texts where Foucault most directly engages with the concept of “critique,” he invokes the figure of philosopher, Immanuel Kant, as the genesis of a larger critical tradition from which Foucault self-reflexively views his own work as participating. Indeed, although writing pseudonymously for entry on his own work in the *Dictionnaire des Philosophes*, Foucault identifies and situates his work in relation to a larger philosophical framework of “critique” as it develops out of Kant and the critical tradition of the Enlightenment.⁵⁵⁴ Thus, in Foucault’s entry to the second edition of the *Dictionnaire des Philosophes*, he maintains the following: “[t]o the extent that Foucault fits into the philosophical tradition, it is the critical tradition of Kant.”⁵⁵⁵ While posing Foucault’s philosophical thought in relation to Kant might appear “ambivalent” to some, it has also been noted that “[a]side perhaps from Nietzsche, Kant figures more prominently than any other philosopher” in Foucault’s thought.⁵⁵⁶ Although his reading of Kant is often contested by orthodox philosophers, Kant’s importance to Foucault cannot be underestimated, and the use of Kant as a key referent stretches the entirety of Foucault’s career.⁵⁵⁷ As Foucault writes in a lecture delivered at Stanford

⁵⁵⁴ In the early eighties, Foucault’s assistant at the Collège de France, François Ewald, was asked to reedit the entry on Foucault for the then new edition of the *Dictionnaire des Philosophes*. James Faubion points out that the reedited text was almost entirely written by Foucault himself under the pseudonym Maurice Florence. For publication information regarding this entry see: editor’s note to “Foucault,” in *Foucault: Aesthetics, Method, Epistemology*, ed. James D. Faubion, trans. Robert Hurley, et al (New York: The New Press, 1998), 459.

⁵⁵⁵ Ibid, 459.

⁵⁵⁶ Marc Djaballah, “Immanuel Kant,” in *The Cambridge Foucault Lexicon*, eds. Leonard Lawlor and John Nale (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), 641.

⁵⁵⁷ Supervised by Jean Hyppolite, in 1961 Foucault submitted his secondary PhD (*thèse complémentaire*) on Kant. Accompanied by a substantial introduction, Foucault’s thesis was a Translation of Kant’s 1798

University in 1979, the importance of Kant in relation to his thought and methodology can be understood in two primary manners. “Since Kant,” Foucault writes:

the role of philosophy has been to prevent reason from going beyond the limits of what is given in experience; but from the same moment—that is, from the development of modern states and political management of society—the role of philosophy has also been to keep watch over the excessive powers of political rationality.⁵⁵⁸

While Dreyfus and Rabinow observe how “Foucault reinterprets Kant’s linking of the historical moment, critical reason, and society as a challenge to develop a radically new version of what it means to lead a philosophical life,” in the passage above Foucault also makes it clear that his interest in Kant also appears in regard to a political register.⁵⁵⁹

Given that both Kant’s original publication and Foucault’s 1984 lecture share similar titles, it is clear that Foucault hopes to frame and situate his own thought in relation to the same critical tradition in which this problematic arises.⁵⁶⁰ Indeed, as Marc Djaballah notes, the critical tradition beginning with Kant’s essay on the enlightenment designates Foucault’s “most direct point of reference” for the development of his own theory of “critique.”⁵⁶¹ Regardless of the influence Kant had on Foucault’s work as a

text *Anthropology from a Pragmatic Point of View*, and marks Foucault’s first sustained study of Kant. Foucault’s secondary thesis was first published in French as *Kant’s Anthropologie du Point de Vue Pragmatique* and *Introduction à L’Anthropologie* (Paris: Vrin, 2009). The introduction was published in an English translation by Arianna Bove on generation-online.org in 2003, and was again in English as *Introduction to Kant’s Anthropology* (tr. Roberto Nigro and Kate Briggs). Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2008. Although Foucault’s use of Kant is somewhat sporadic until the publication of “What Is Critique?” in 1976, Kant is a strong influence on Foucault’s early work on the analysis and reappears with particular force toward the end of his life with the publication of “What is Enlightenment?” as well as several of last series of lectures delivered at the Collège De France. Indeed, the first two lectures (both delivered on January 5th, 1983) published in the collection titled *The Government of Self and Others: Lectures at the Collège De France 1983-1984*, mark an explicit return to Kant in Foucault’s thought. In this way, it is clear that when Foucault situates his thought within the critical tradition of Kant, we can point toward the way in which this takes place.

⁵⁵⁸ Michel Foucault, “Omnes et Singulatim: Toward a Critique of Political Reason,” 298.

⁵⁵⁹ Hubert L. Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, “What is Maturity? Habermas and Foucault on ‘What is Enlightenment?’” in *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, ed. David Couzens-Hoy (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), 111.

⁵⁶⁰ Kant’s essay “An Answer to the Question: What is Enlightenment?” initially appeared in the December 1784 issue of the *Berlinische Monatsschrift*. This essay was later republished in English in a collection of Kant’s works titled *Immanuel Kant: Practical Philosophy*, trans. and ed. Mary J Gregor (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), 11-22.

⁵⁶¹ Marc Djaballah, “Foucault on Kant, Enlightenment, and Being Critical,” in *A Companion to Foucault*, ed. Christopher Falzon, et al. (U.K.: Blackwell Publishing, 2013), 265.

philosopher, he nevertheless does not identify as a Kantian—that is, Foucault does not view his work as a continuation of Kant’s project. Instead, rather, Foucault claims that his work, insofar as it pertains to the tradition of philosophy, participates in the *critical tradition* arising out of Kant’s essay on the Enlightenment. It is this critical tradition, and not an orthodox reading of Kant’s texts, from which Foucault begins to rethink the question of politics through the concept of “critique.” Thus, while Dreyfus and Rabinow demonstrate that Foucault’s relation to Kant helped to reshape the basis of his philosophical thought, the relation of Kant to Foucault additionally helps to develop a radically new way to engage with the history of political thought and the problematic of governmentality. For John Ransom, then, “[w]hat Foucault gives us” through the concept of critique “is a different way of looking at and responding to the myriad ways of being governed that surround us—in short, a new depiction of the political world.”⁵⁶² At stake in Ransom’s reading of Foucault’s relation to Kant, however, is more specifically how Foucault begins to rethink the notion of “critique” within the context of his own studies of power and governmentality. For Djaballah, then, the continuity between Kant and Foucault more correctly arises in the way that the latter politicizes the former: “[t]he attitude defined by Kant as that of enlightenment is a theoretical formulation of the attitude of being critical that Foucault identifies in the context of the political arts of governing.”⁵⁶³ Yet, in tracing the political development of Foucault’s use of the term “critique,” Djaballah reveals how the notion of “critique” comes to exemplify what Foucault theorizes in terms of the politics of resistance.⁵⁶⁴ While Djaballah is correct to locate the concept of “critique” as a potential historical source of Foucault’s theory of resistance, it is my contention that this relation between “critique” and resistance is first elaborated in terms of a philosophical problematization of the question of authority and, more fundamentally, that this struggle against authority reveals an alternative foundation in philosophy and political theory from which the structure of the political and the question of politics is rethought by Foucault anarchically.

⁵⁶² John S. Ransom, *Foucault’s Discipline: The Politics of Subjectivity* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 9.

⁵⁶³ Marc Djaballah, “Foucault on Kant, Enlightenment, and Being Critical,” 272.

⁵⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 271. Herein Djaballah writes that “being critical can be considered Foucault’s specification of the practices of resistance to governmentality.”

In the 1984 lecture, Foucault situates his study of “critique” within the context of the philosopher’s struggle against the condition of authority. In this regard, Foucault first emphasizes how Kant defines the Enlightenment as the critical process by which humanity might come to leave its state of minority.⁵⁶⁵ In other words, the essay is framed in terms of a critical theory of emancipation; it is this potential condition of emancipation that Foucault’s locates at the basis of the concept of “critique.” According to Foucault, then, Kant’s understanding of the Enlightenment does not refer to a specific historical era, but is instead conceived “in an almost entirely negative way...an exit, a way out.”⁵⁶⁶ Taking the general problematic regarding the possibility of attaining a “way out” from one’s “state of minority,” in the 1984 lecture, Foucault outlines three distinctive characteristics of Kant’s project which form the basis of his analysis of “critique” and its relation to the question of authority. First, the minoritarian condition in which humanity is maintained refers to a “certain state of our will that makes us accept someone else’s authority;”⁵⁶⁷ second, in relation to the problem of authority, this minoritarian condition is further characterized by the incapacity to use one’s own reasoning without the guidance of others;⁵⁶⁸ finally, this incapacity to use one’s own reason designates the simultaneity between an excess of authority and a lack of “courage” to use one’s own reason without the guidance of others.⁵⁶⁹ Following these three general problematics—which all focus around the problem of authority for Foucault—the 1984 lecture begins by emphasizing the relation between Kant’s brief essay and the three *Critiques*. For Foucault, what is crucial in outlining the connection between Kant’s minor essay and his major works is the way in which Kant describes the Enlightenment as the moment when humanity puts its own reason to use, without subjecting itself to any form of authority. As Foucault begins to argue here, the notion of “critique” develops as a way to rethink the politico-philosophical problem of authority and obedience. In other words, the concept of “critique” is initially posed by Foucault within the context of a position of philosophical anti-authoritarianism. It is through the development of the notion of

⁵⁶⁵ Michel Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: Vintage Books, 1984), 34.

⁵⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 34.

⁵⁶⁷ *Ibid*, 34.

⁵⁶⁸ *Ibid*, 35.

⁵⁶⁹ *Ibid*, 35.

“critique” and the coinciding problematic of authority that Kant’s text, Foucault argues, can be read as marking out a “discreet entrance into the history of thought of a question that modern philosophy has not been capable of answering.”⁵⁷⁰ In other words, what is at stake for Foucault is that the basic goal of critical philosophy is to think through the question of authority in its specificity. If, therefore, as Foucault claims that “modern philosophy is the philosophy that is attempting to answer the question of the Enlightenment,” and furthermore that the “Enlightenment is the age of the critique,” then philosophy’s relation to the concept of “critique” emerges as a fundamental confrontation with the question of authority.⁵⁷¹

In Foucault’s reading of Kant, the Enlightenment is therefore not understood in terms of a historical era lasting from the mid seventeenth century until the end of the eighteenth framed by a rationalist-humanist discourse, but an ongoing and continuous process in which “philosophical thought” begins to critically “reflect on its own present.”⁵⁷² Indeed, this is what Foucault holds to be the crucial philosophical change insinuated in Kant’s work. As Foucault writes in *The Government of Self and Others*, with Kant’s “text a new type of question appears in the field of philosophical reflection...the question of the present, of present reality.”⁵⁷³ Yet this philosophical reflection regarding one’s own historical situation is additionally coupled with the problem of authority for Foucault. Foucault writes: “[i]t seems to me that the question of modernity arose with the question of what authority was to be accepted.”⁵⁷⁴ Similar to the method of “anarchaeology,” the concept of “critique” takes the non-acceptability of authority as its starting point. It is precisely within the context this critical tradition—which at once changes the focus of philosophy to a critical engagement with the intersection between one’s own present conditions and the problematic of authority—in

⁵⁷⁰ Ibid, 32.

⁵⁷¹ Ibid, 32; 38.

⁵⁷² Ibid, 33. By characterizing the Enlightenment as an ongoing process rather than a historical era or set of texts and ideas, Foucault seems to have in mind a key distinction Kant makes in his essay. As Kant writes in 1784, “If it is now asked, whether we at present live in an *enlightened age*?” the answer is, “No, but we do live in an *age of enlightenment*” (21, original italics). Kant’s slight change between an “enlightened age” and the “age of enlightenment” demonstrates one of the key focal points Foucault derives from this text in relation to the critical task of philosophy.

⁵⁷³ Michel Foucault, *The Government of the Self and Others. Lectures at the Collège de France 1982-1983*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 11.

⁵⁷⁴ Ibid, 13.

which Foucault attempts to redevelop the concept of “critique” as the basis of his own approach to the study of philosophy. As Foucault further maintains in the 1984 lecture: “the thread that may connect us to the Enlightenment is not faithfulness to doctrinal elements, but rather the permanent reactivation of an attitude—that is, of a philosophical ethos that could be described as a permanent critique of our historical era.”⁵⁷⁵

Consequently, this critical relation to one’s own present condition arises, for Foucault, with a struggle against authority, or a new critical attitude that resists the problem of excessive authority. By invoking drawing an explicit connection between critique and the reactivation of a permanent critical attitude, or ethos, Foucault seeks to describe the problematic of the Enlightenment in terms of the development of a new critical ethics which takes as its turning point the problem of authority and obedience. Thus, in the second section of “What is Enlightenment?” Foucault outlines three features distinctive to the historical development of “critique,” all of which ultimately turn upon elaboration of an anti-authoritarian ethos.

First by “critical attitude” Foucault means to suggest a specific “mode of relating to contemporary reality,” whereby the attitude of critique constitutes a specific relation to one’s own present conditions.⁵⁷⁶ Here “critique” is a state of philosophical reflection that renders one’s own historical conditions visible as such. Second, this critical attitude is, according to Foucault, “a voluntary choice made by certain people”—that is, “critique” contrasts a position of voluntary agency against Étienne De La Boétie’s notion of “voluntary servitude.”⁵⁷⁷ Third, the critical attitude is “a way of thinking and feeling” about one’s own historical situation, and thus a “way of acting and behaving that at one and the same time marks a relation of belonging and presents itself as a task.”⁵⁷⁸

Inasmuch as Foucault self-identifies his thought within this critical tradition, the larger trajectory of his works must be understood in relation to the ongoing and “permanent critique of our historical era” made possible in the reactivation of an anti-authoritarian attitude and ethos of existence Foucault calls “critique.” Yet while Foucault seeks to locate the trajectory of his work within the critical tradition of the Enlightenment, what is

⁵⁷⁵ Michel Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?”, 42.

⁵⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 39.

⁵⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 39.

⁵⁷⁸ *Ibid*, 39.

absolutely essential is that the reactivation of the critical attitude itself develops in relation to an ongoing struggle with the problem of authority, in which the turn toward ethical transformation must be understood on the cusp of the problematic of authority and the governing of others. Indeed, it is against the problematic of authority that Foucault both begins to develop his use of the notion of “critique” while at the same time utilizing the tradition of this critical attitude as the anchoring point from which to locate the general problematic of resistance as it develops in his thought.

With the concept of “critique,” we have seen how Foucault introduces the problematic of the Enlightenment through Kant in order to outline what he holds to be the key challenge and coinciding critical task for philosophy. Yet Foucault radicalizes Kant’s thought in order to demonstrate that the key problem philosophy has been incapable of solving are the problematics of authority and political obedience. In its critical reflection on one’s present conditions, philosophy, for Foucault, begins in the struggle against the general problem of authority. In other words, at the moment when philosophical thought begins to critically reflect on its own present, the problem of authority is made visible, and it is this fundamental struggle with the question of authority is what Foucault labels as the basic task of philosophy. In his unorthodox reading of Kant, Foucault argues that the key philosophical problematic developed out of the Enlightenment ought to therefore be understood as a “modification of the pre-existing relation linking will, authority, and the use of reason.”⁵⁷⁹ In response to Kant’s essay, then, Foucault asserts the claim that what a philosophical engagement with the problematic of the Enlightenment offers, is a radical reflection on our current situation—or what he refers to as a “permanent critique of our historical era” in which the task of philosophy appears as an ongoing modification of the present through the struggle with relations of authority.

It is within this philosophical and critical tradition involved in a permanent critique of the present that Foucault (albeit late in his career) outlines as the basic analytic and methodological framework for his thought that begins to align his thought with anarchism. To be sure, although Foucault’s major works and their respective thematics might appear as fundamentally disparate to some of his harsher critics, they can all be seen as participating in and elaborating a perpetual critique of our historical era. Yet, at the same

⁵⁷⁹ Ibid, 35.

time, the thread that connects Foucault's thought and work to the critical tradition of the Enlightenment is not simply a retheorization of philosophy's relationship to the present, but the "reactivation of an attitude," or, "philosophical ethos" that develops as a "permanent critique" of authority.⁵⁸⁰ In other words, a critical reflection on one's own present, necessitates for Foucault an ongoing critique of authority and a coinciding social ontology of critique as the condition of possibility for critical philosophy as such. By analyzing the problem of the Enlightenment in terms of an ongoing relation to one's present, Foucault's central claim is that Kant reactivates the concept of "critique"—characterized here as both attitude and ethos—under which the very task of philosophy changes and begins to turn upon a radical critique of authority. In its most preliminary form, it is through the introduction of the concept of "critique" into his thought that Foucault begins to radically rework the philosophical framework from which to understand the structure of the political and the history of politics. If the history of philosophy, as Foucault suggests in this lecture, has traditionally been incapable of overcoming the problem of authority, then what he takes as the very basis of his critical thought additionally helps to point toward an alternative philosophical position from which to understand the domain of the political. The force relations that constitute the domain of the political cannot simply be reduced to the questions which presuppose the necessity of authority—of the *archē*—as the principle from which politics emerges. Instead, rather, Foucault argues that there is a corresponding critical attitude that resists the manifestation of authority, and it is the very possibility of this critical attitude of resistance that indicates a new analytic framework for the study of the political.

For Foucault, then, the problem of the Enlightenment—which, is defined as the key problem for philosophy—is therefore posed "in relation to a certain minority condition in which humanity was maintained and maintained in an authoritative way."⁵⁸¹ The basic philosophical problem—indeed its most fundamental question—according to Foucault, is to critique not simply the basis of authority, but its multifarious and continual manifestation, and to challenge the subordinate position in which a "minority" is maintained. In the first lecture from *The Government of Self and Others*, Foucault

⁵⁸⁰ Ibid, 42.

⁵⁸¹ Ibid, 42.

extensively focuses on the problem of “tutelage” or minoritarian condition.⁵⁸² Through a critical reflection on what Kant means by a state of tutelage, Foucault argues that the minoritarian state is not defined as a condition in which individuals are forcibly deprived of their “means and possibilities of autonomy.”⁵⁸³ Instead, rather, the minoritarian condition is brought about through a voluntary dependence on authority. Foucault thus writes:

If men are in this condition of tutelage, if they are subject to the direction of others, it is not because these others have seized power, or that it has been handed over to them in an essential, founding and instituting act...it is because men are unable or do not wish to conduct themselves, and others have obligingly come forward to conduct them.⁵⁸⁴

This condition of tutelage is itself a condition of governmentality—that is, the problem of tutelage for Foucault is characterized by a “vitiating relationship between government of self and government of others.”⁵⁸⁵ Yet what is at stake, is that the critical attitude that develops from the Enlightenment is set to modify this problem of government; the task of the Enlightenment is according to Foucault “precisely to redistribute the relationships between government of self and government of others.”⁵⁸⁶ As Foucault suggests in the 1983 lecture the very position and critical function of the notion of “critique” is faced with the task of leaving the condition of tutelage through the reactivation of a “critical attitude” that arises historically in terms of an ongoing struggle with the problem of authority and government. Thus, for Foucault the task inherent in the philosophy of the Enlightenment is to exit from one’s minoritarian position through the exercise of critical activity. As we will see in the analysis of the 1978 lecture, Foucault contributes to this problem by inscribing the practice of resistance into the very basis of “critique”—that is, resistance is what makes possible the critical exiting from one’s condition of tutelage.

In this regard, Judith Butler has drawn an important connection between the discovery of the critical attitude and the question of resistance in Foucault’s thought. As

⁵⁸² See: Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others*, 26-39.

⁵⁸³ *Ibid*, 29.

⁵⁸⁴ *Ibid*, 29.

⁵⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 32.

⁵⁸⁶ *Ibid*, 33.

Butler importantly remarks “resistance to authority...constitutes the hallmark of the Enlightenment for Foucault.”⁵⁸⁷ Here Butler importantly points toward a direct connection between what Foucault analyses through “critique” and the question of resistance. Inasmuch as the concept of “critique” marks the critical axis from which to understand the breadth of his work, then this concept cannot itself be separated from the concept of resistance; “critique” is fundamentally an extended discussion of the problem of resistance in Foucault’s thought. Since, as we have seen, that Foucault directly situates his work within the critical tradition of the Enlightenment, what Butler points to here is of vital importance for uncovering two preliminary ways in which we can begin to point toward the ways in which Foucault’s thought begins to develop and turn upon an anarchist hypothesis of the political. First, the critical tradition of the Enlightenment is fundamentally characterized and marked, according to Foucault, by resistance to authority; this is, according to Foucault, the founding act of critical philosophy as it develops out of the Enlightenment itself arises as a condition of resistance. In this way, insofar as Foucault’s work can be seen as reactivating the tradition of the Enlightenment as the very basic framework for his thought, he additionally establishes the concept of resistance as the central basis from which the critical tradition of the Enlightenment might continue. Through the development of the notion of “critique,” Foucault thus inscribes resistance into the very basic framework for his philosophical thought. Additionally, at the same time as resistance constitutes the hallmark of Foucault’s work, resistance to authority also establishes the way in which Foucault begins to rethink the question of politics in a radically new way. Insofar as the Enlightenment is what is counter-posed to, and continuously resists, the problem of authority, what Foucault therefore outlines and centralizes to the trajectory of his work in terms of a radical and permanent critique of ourselves begins with an anti-authoritarian ethic that radically begins to reframe the position of philosophy and the domain of the political from the perspective of resistance. Taken together, the above two points invoke a preliminary, yet conceptually vital, relation between Foucault’s philosophical project and the history of anarchism through the reactivation of the critical attitude of the Enlightenment.

⁵⁸⁷ Judith Butler, “What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault’s Virtue,” 5.

Although there is no single locus for the historical origin of anarchism, several anarchist historians have pointed toward the way in which, as both movement and philosophy, anarchism derives “directly from the ideas of the eighteenth century Enlightenment.”⁵⁸⁸ While anarchism might be seen as developing, at least in part, through a relation with the ideas of the Enlightenment, the way in which Foucault poses the Enlightenment not as a doctrine, but as a continual anti-authoritarian critique of the present, reinvigorates the relation between anarchism and the Enlightenment, and likewise the relation between anarchism and Foucault in a way that anticipates current debates in political theory, while at the same time centralizing the concept of resistance to his project. In other words, both Foucault and anarchists take the critique of authority as the basis from which critical philosophy begins. In this way, as anarchist philosopher Paul McLaughlin argues in a position similar to Foucault, that anarchism ought to be defined “in relation to the fundamental ethico-political problem of authority.”⁵⁸⁹ Crucially, for McLaughlin, “anarchists” both “take as their starting point *the open question of authority*,” while alongside the “*philosophes*, they assert their right to raise this question” (original emphasis).⁵⁹⁰ In asserting that anarchism takes, at its very basis, a fundamental critique of authority, and that this very critique is what helps to form an alliance between anarchism and the history of critical philosophy, what McLaughlin points to here as a key component of philosophical anarchism, also uncovers a key link between anarchism and Foucault’s general project through the notion of critique.

⁵⁸⁸ Richard Sonn, *Anarchism* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1992), 13. Also see: Noam Chomsky, “Notes on Anarchism,” in *Chomsky on Anarchism* (California: AK Press, 1969), 122. Here not only does Chomsky suggest that the ideas of anarchism “grow out of the Enlightenment,” but he also ties this relation, in part, to Kant’s insistence that freedom is the precondition for freedom (122). Given the way in which Foucault considers the Enlightenment a key problematic developed through Kant, the connection here between anarchism, Kant and the Enlightenment should not be overlooked. At the same time, however, I must be careful in asserting an immediate relation between the Enlightenment and anarchism. Several theorists have critiqued and problematized the so-called Enlightenment origins of anarchism. Suspect critiques of the relation between anarchism and the Enlightenment are typically centered against the ideas regarding both positing an inherently progressive development of history and an essentialist conception of human nature, that has since been considered by many anarchists as increasingly problematic. See, for example: Saul Newman, *The Politics of Postanarchism*, 6. Also see: David Morland, *Demanding the Impossible: Human Nature and Politics in the Nineteenth-Century Social Anarchism* (London: Cassell Publishing, 1997), 1-4; 11-22.

⁵⁸⁹ Paul McLaughlin, *Anarchism and Authority*, 1.

⁵⁹⁰ *Ibid*, 31.

With the notion of “critique” acting as the basic philosophical framework that underpins his thought, Foucault invokes the history of anarchism not as a fundamental foundation, but as an alternative methodology for the rethinking the perspective of philosophy and the domain of the political from the point of view of resistance and an open questioning of authority. Thus, as we will see in the following section, while several theorists deny the connection between Foucault’s thought and anarchism, the way he shapes an anti-authoritarian critique into the basis of his philosophical approach to the question of politics invokes and continues the tradition of anarchist thought by building its most basic tenet into the core of his work. This, then, is the first way in which we can begin to understand the ways in which Foucault’s methodology begins to develop and posit I refer as the anarchist hypothesis of the political. Rather than beginning, as traditional philosophers often do, with the archē as the historical a priori or transcendental condition of possibility for thinking through the terms of the political and the social context of politics, Foucault suggests instead an alternative possibility beginning with what he begins to develop under the heading of “critique.” *As an instrument for those who “fight,” “resist,” and “refuse what is,” the very task of the critical attitude takes as its starting point an irreducible critique of authority—that is, critical philosophy, for Foucault, is none other than the elaboration of “essays in refusal” beginning from the position of autonomy rather than the first principle of the archē; critique, as such, is the philosophical position that begins with a fundamental “challenge to what is.”*⁵⁹¹

With the notion of “critique” acting as the general structure for the philosophical tradition in which Foucault participates, what I point toward here as the key connection between Foucault and the anarchist tradition in terms of an ongoing struggle with the problem of authority, also informs the analytic framework from which Foucault’s oeuvre might be reread. It is in this way that postanarchist Todd May demonstrates how the alleged elusiveness of Foucault’s thought might be attenuated if it can be tied to a “single question” which appears and finds its elaboration around the intersection between “critique” and the Enlightenment.⁵⁹² For May, the most basic philosophical question—the question regarding “who we are?” is the guiding thread of Foucault’s work, and is

⁵⁹¹ Michel Foucault, “Question of Method,” 236.

⁵⁹² Todd May, *The Philosophy of Foucault*, 2.

thus “never far from the surface of any of his works.”⁵⁹³ May points out that the critical question that asks “who we are?” finds its elaboration in the celebrated lecture from 1984 when Foucault begins to explain the task of philosophy and his work in relation to what he refers to as the “critical ontology of ourselves.”⁵⁹⁴ Indeed, in an interview from 1977 Foucault argues that “philosophy’s question...is the question as to what we ourselves are.”⁵⁹⁵ If as May suggests, that the “critical ontology of ourselves” marks the principal guiding thread of Foucault’s general project, then we can additionally point toward the ways in which the notion of “critique” and its coinciding anti-authoritarian ethic traverses Foucault’s work as well. At the same time, however, the critical reflection on who we ourselves are necessitates, for Foucault, a coinciding political dimension of critique that can ultimately never be divorced from the permanent critique of authority. Precisely because the task of philosophy takes as its starting point the irreducible critique of authority, this is why Foucault argues that “contemporary philosophy is entirely political and historical.”⁵⁹⁶ It is in posing a critical relation between the historical question regarding who we are and the anti-authoritarian ethic of “critique” that we can begin to develop a stronger connecting thread between the different periods of Foucault’s thought. Nonetheless, what is at stake for Foucault is that the philosophical dimension of critique consequently requires a direct engagement with the study of the political, and as such, what can be identified as the guiding thread of Foucault’s thought under analytic framework of the “critical ontology of ourselves,” turns upon both the philosophical and political axes of critique.

Paying close attention to the interplay between the philosophical and political dimensions of critique, Foucault suggests in “What is Enlightenment?” that what can be understood as “the critical ontology of ourselves” is not essential foundation, but rather an anti-authoritarian “attitude or, an ethos, a philosophical life in which the critique of what we are is at one and the same time the historical analysis of the limits that are imposed on us and an experiment with the possibility of going beyond them.”⁵⁹⁷ Thus,

⁵⁹³ Ibid, 2.

⁵⁹⁴ Michel Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?”, 47.

⁵⁹⁵ Michel Foucault, “Power and Sex.” In *Michel Foucault: Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman (New York: Routledge, 1988), 121.

⁵⁹⁶ Ibid, 121.

⁵⁹⁷ Michel Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?”, 50.

whereas May argues that Foucault's thought can be understood in relation to the question pertaining to who we are, this question always turns upon, according to Foucault, another coinciding problem regarding the possibility of becoming otherwise, or a radical transformation in one's own condition of subjectivity. In this way, the ethos, or "critical attitude" Foucault seeks to reactivate through Kant and the Enlightenment turns upon both negation and affirmation. As Foucault outlines in the 1984 lecture, the critical ontology of ourselves implies a theory of negation culminating in the affirmation of a possible political transformation. "Critique" first implies a "refusal" of what Foucault refers to as the "blackmail of the Enlightenment," wherein "one has to refuse everything that might present itself in the form of a simplistic and authoritarian manner."⁵⁹⁸

Secondly, such an analytic framework for Foucault, "has to avoid the always facile confusions between humanism and Enlightenment," and thus the task is not to posit an essential humanist foundation that gives rise to the "critical attitude," but rather to "imagine it [the current historical situation] otherwise than it is, and to transform it."⁵⁹⁹

With the development of this "critical attitude" Foucault does not invoke a premodern or essential foundation from which the critique of authority arises; instead, rather, the critique of authority is directed at and takes place at the limits imposed on us in order to transform them. Crucially, then, in a similar manner to the way in which resistance to authority underpins what Foucault identifies as the task of philosophical critique, the analysis of the authoritarian limits imposed on us is significantly paired with the affirmative possibility of political transformation.

Thus, for Foucault, the radical critique of authority is not simply a pure move of negation, but that which, in its negation of authority, leads to and culminates in a critical transformation with that which maintains humanity in its minoritarian condition. Indeed, as Foucault argues, it is not simply enough to renounce authority; instead, rather, "the critical question has to be turned back into a positive one."⁶⁰⁰ The point of critique is not therefore launched as an anti-authoritarian "gesture of rejection;" the "point." Foucault maintains is instead "to transform the critique conducted in the necessary limitation into a

⁵⁹⁸ Ibid, 42.

⁵⁹⁹ Ibid, 43; 41.

⁶⁰⁰ Ibid, 45.

practical critique that takes the form of a possible transgression.”⁶⁰¹ To be sure, as Foucault suggests in an interview from 1981, the notion of critique and its coinciding ethic of anti-authoritarianism, is what makes radical transformation possible: “criticism (and radical criticism),” Foucault writes, “is absolutely indispensable for any transformation.”⁶⁰² Situating the radical critique of authority, which as we seen for Foucault radically reframes the basis for political thought, as “indispensable” for the very possibility of transformation, Foucault demonstrates that the negation of authority culminates and finds its expression in the potentiality of transforming the limit points at which critique is directed.

Through the radicalization of a critical “attitude” and “ethos” derived from Kant, Foucault indeed suggests that what has always remained central to his work is a continuation of the project of the Enlightenment, in which the concept of critique suggests a philosophical coupling between historical analysis of ourselves—that is the analysis of the conditions of possibility of our own ontology—and the possibility to become otherwise. Here it is easy to see that any study of Foucault which attends to the first part of this coupling at the expense of the latter, necessarily misses what is fundamentally at stake in the project of Foucault’s work. While May and others are thus correct to point to the way in which the concept of “critique” might help to locate a general trajectory in Foucault’s philosophy as the simultaneous study of “who we are” and “who we might be,”⁶⁰³ this same trajectory, I claim, acts as the basis for a preliminary outline of a new approach to the domains of philosophy and politics which, in turn, requires a more serious engagement with the question of resistance. Indeed, on the one hand Foucault defines the critical attitude of the Enlightenment as an attitude or ethos situated at the horizon of the historical problematic of authority, and as such his thought prefigures the meta-political and anarchist turns in political theory by rethinking the task of philosophy at the limit or horizon of the state. Yet, the importance of the idea of “critique” can only be fully understood in relation to the coinciding problematic of resistance, a concept which is significantly reintroduced into Foucault’s work at the same

⁶⁰¹ Ibid, 45.

⁶⁰² Michel Foucault, “Power and Sex,” 155.

⁶⁰³ See: Todd May. *The Philosophy of Foucault*, 96-125.

time when he begins to situate his thought in relation to a larger critical framework of the Enlightenment.

Faced not simply with the philosophical problem of authority, then, but with its material manifestation as well, what initially appears as a principal problem for philosophy is itself coupled with a political context. The Enlightenment, according to Foucault, “now appears as a political problem.”⁶⁰⁴ By coupling a political dimension with the philosophical framework of the Enlightenment, what is at stake for Foucault is to demonstrate how “the attitude of modernity, ever since its formation, has found itself struggling with attitudes of countermodernity.”⁶⁰⁵ This is to say that alongside—indeed coupled with—the history of political power and government, are the historical movements running counter and outside of the manifestation of authority. Focusing on the way in which Kant defines the Enlightenment in terms of a radical escape—an “exit” or “way out”—we can now better understand the way in which Foucault suggests that the task of philosophy which “characterizes the Enlightenment” is the development of the critical attitude “that releases us from the status of our immaturity.”⁶⁰⁶ If as Foucault maintains in the 1984 lecture that the key problem developed through Kant’s project finds its critical impetus as an exiting from “man’s self-incurred tutelage,” then in a much more radical way, Foucault raises the stakes in order to suggest that the task of philosophy is to begin with and think through a certain “exiting” or “way out,” not only from the problem of authority but, more specifically, from the ontological condition in which human beings are maintained in a minoritarian manner. At the same time, however, what is crucial in the relation between the movements of modernity and movement of counter-modernity are, as we will see in the following section, the ways in which Foucault begins to reread the history of politics through the question of resistance and revolt.

It is within this political dimension of critique that we can uncover another manner in which Foucault’s concept of critique invokes another crucial affinity with anarchism. Insofar as anarchism can be tied (at least in part) to the history of the

⁶⁰⁴ Michel Foucault, “What is Enlightenment?”, 37.

⁶⁰⁵ Ibid, 39.

⁶⁰⁶ Ibid, 34.

Enlightenment it has always existed, as Jun recently argues, not only as a philosophical critique of authority, but also as a movement of what Foucault refers to as the “attitudes of countermodernity.”⁶⁰⁷ In this regard, Jun maintains that “anarchism has from the beginning defined itself against modernity—not by stealing Romantic glances at a premodern past, but by looking for something new, something that stands apart from, exists outside of, or altogether moves beyond, modernity.”⁶⁰⁸ The history of anarchism is, according to Jun, itself a movement of Foucault’s theory of “countermodernity.” Whereas we have seen that task of the critical attitude of philosophical takes as its starting point the irreducible critique of authority, and in this way forms an alliance with the philosophical basis of anarchism, we can now assert a second coinciding axis along which the critique of authority becomes manifest as the movement of politics. As such, with the concept of “critique” Foucault invokes not only the unconditional critique of authority that has always remained the basic tenet of the position of philosophical anarchism, but also calls forth a rethinking of the question and practice of resistance—a practice that has always remained a key component of anarchist theory—as the very grid from which to rethink the history of politics. Although Foucault does not use the language of resistance in the 1984 lecture, the 1978 lecture makes the relation between resistance, and anarchism and “critique” more clear.

In order to demonstrate more fully the way in which the concept of “critique” in Foucault’s thought develops and turns upon what I have preliminarily outlined as the anarchist hypothesis of the political, in which the philosophical critique of authority prefigures the possibility of transformation, and as such necessitates an engagement with the domain of the political through the concept of resistance, it is necessary to now turn to the corresponding 1978 lecture. The foundational authority that maintains humanity in its minoritarian condition and defines the modern condition since the Enlightenment, is alternatively developed in the 1978 lecture in relation to the larger context of Foucault’s study of governmentality. For Foucault, the general problematic of authority that maintains subordinate positions is itself a form of governmentalization and yet at the same time—and even consequently according to Foucault—alongside the history of

⁶⁰⁷ Ibid, 39.

⁶⁰⁸ Nathan Jun, *Anarchism and Political Modernity*, xi.

governmentality is the political and critical attitude that resists it. Whereas the philosophical dimension of critique in the 1984 lecture invokes resistance to authority as the very basis for philosophy, in the 1978 lecture, Foucault additionally asserts resistance to governmentality as the very basis for politics and the study of the political.

If the general problematic of the Enlightenment, as Foucault suggests in the 1984 lecture, is the thinking through of our “exit” from the problem of authority in terms of a philosophical critique, then what makes the earlier lecture “What is Critique?” significant is the way this problematic is coupled with a historico-political dimension that invokes the key concept of resistance in order to understand the manner in which critique becomes realized as an “art of not being governed”—or the struggle between the rise of governmentalization and counter-historical movements of resistance. Indeed, it is my contention that the transformation made possible through the radical critique of authority is best exemplified in the concept of resistance, or the critical ethos developed as a specific “art of not being governed.” By analyzing the notion of “critique as an ongoing withdrawal from the problem of government, in addition to the anti-authoritarian critical attitude discussed above, we can more clearly see how Foucault builds an anarchist hypothesis of the political into the whole of his thought.

3.3 Critique and the Art of Not Being Governed

In conclusion...might it not now be necessary to follow the other route...And if it is necessary to ask the question about knowledge in its relation to domination, it would be, first and foremost, from a certain decision-making will not to be governed, the decision making will, both an individual and collective attitude which meant, as Kant said, to get out of one's minority.⁶⁰⁹
 --Michel Foucault

Although Foucault situates his work within the critical tradition of Kant in order to reintroduce the question of authority to philosophy, his understanding of “critique” as it develops in the political context differs from Kant in one key aspect that cannot be overlooked. In Kantian political theory, the state and the a priori character of law are

⁶⁰⁹ Michel Foucault, “What is Critique?”, 66.

presupposed as the universal terms through which the political can be articulated.⁶¹⁰ Foucault, however, denies this artifice and suggests how the concept of “critique” reveals an alternative foundation of politics irreducible to the state. While the concept of “critique” in the 1984 lecture acts as the basic theoretical and methodological framework from which Foucault begins to rethink the critical task of philosophy, this same concept is additionally invoked in the 1978 lecture as a way to inform an alternative analytic theory of the political opposed to and outside a theory of the state. In order to account for this alternative understanding of “critique,” the 1978 lecture undertakes a genealogical account of being critical in terms of a socio-political practice arising in response to the growth of Foucault refers to as “pastoral power.”⁶¹¹ Rather than simply tracing the history of the political to the emergence of governmentality, in “What is Critique?” Foucault claims that what is required is a theory of the political opposed to the history of government. As outlined in this lecture, it is with the concept of “critique” that Foucault begins to rethink the possibility of an alternative theory of the political opposed to governmentality. As we will see, this alternative approach to the study of politics begins with, according to Foucault, a “certain decision-making will not to be governed.”⁶¹² It is by beginning with this critical will not to be governed that Foucault begins to fundamentally rethink the domain of the political in such a way that it cannot be reduced or simplified to the problematic of governmentality. Given that the problematic of governmentality is more thoroughly developed in Foucault’s lexicon than the concept of authority, what Foucault outlines in the 1978 lecture as the permanent interplay between governmentality and the “art of not being governed” is essential in tracing how the concept of “critique” ultimately turns upon an anarchist hypothesis of the political as continuously developed throughout his thought.

⁶¹⁰ On Kant’s understanding of the fundamental relation between politics and the state, see: Immanuel Kant, *Perpetual Peace: A Philosophical Essay*, trans. M. Campbell Smith (London: The Macmillan Company, 1917.) In this text, Kant affords a certain universal and a priori character to the state, in which the thematic of “perpetual peace” developed throughout this text is something that can only be achieved between states. To be fair, in Kant’s conception the “state” is not understood as a territorial “property,” but rather as society of human beings over whom no one but itself has the right to rule” (109). In other words, the state in Kant is a collective form of sovereignty. Nevertheless, Foucault’s political theory, regardless of the influence he takes from Kant, does not presuppose the primacy of the state, and his should work should be distinguished from Kant in this regard.

⁶¹¹ Michel Foucault, “What is Critique?”, 43.

⁶¹² *Ibid*, 75.

Since the position Foucault takes in the 1978 lecture is directly related to the problematic of government, it is necessary to briefly outline what Foucault means by “governmentality.” Published in the same year as “What is Critique?” was a lecture that eventually became part of the lecture series collected as *Security, Territory, Population*, titled “Governmentality” in which Foucault begins to situate his work in relation to the general “problematic of government” and at the same time introduces the concept of “governmentality” into his critical lexicon.⁶¹³ Taken together, these two lectures (“What is Critique?” and “Governmentality” along with the lectures comprising *Security, Territory, Population*) mark the entrance of the problem of government into the wider scope of Foucault’s thought which, as we will see, is subsequently coupled with, by necessity, the general problematic of resistance. Although the term governmentality appears somewhat late in Foucault’s lexicon, the introduction of the general problematic of government into Foucault’s thought marks a key conceptual intervention in his thought, and is central to the lectures he gave at the Collège de France from 1977 until 1984 as well as the final two volumes of the *History of Sexuality*. Rather than attempting to understand Foucault’s work in relation to an analytic of power, as Foucault suggests in *The Government of Self and Others*, the goal is to “analyze power as a field of procedures of government.”⁶¹⁴ As initially defined in the lecture “Governmentality,” Foucault first uses this term in order to restructure the analytic framework from which to understand the problem of politics and political philosophy; that is, for Foucault the analytics of power needs to take into account the problem of governmentality rather than sovereignty in order to fully understand the domain of the political.⁶¹⁵ Yet at the same time, it is

⁶¹³ Michel Foucault, “Governmentality,” 201.

⁶¹⁴ Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others*, 4.

⁶¹⁵ Although it is often disputed what Foucault means by attempting to rethink the history of political philosophy against the history of sovereignty, one of the ways in which he draws attention to his change in focus is through the concept governmentality. Citing an early definition of the term ‘government’ from the French emblem book writer, Guillaume de la Perrière’s 1555 text, *Le Miroir Politique*, in “Governmentality” Foucault argues that the problem of government has “a finality of its own,” and in this respect as Foucault suggests, “it [government] can be clearly distinguished from sovereignty” (210). Yet, at the same time, however, Foucault writes that “sovereignty is far from being eliminated by the emergence of a new art of government,” and is perhaps even “made more acute than ever” (219). Passages such as this tend to elude commenters on Foucault. Yet, rather than attempting to define a clean historical break in terms of the exercise of political power, in claiming that the problem of sovereignty is made more acute by the art of government, Foucault posits that the problematic of governmentality provides a new lens for understanding the idea of political economy.

precisely by engaging with the general problematic of governmentality that Foucault uncovers a new framework for understanding the domain of the political that begins anarchically—which is to say with the question of resistance rather than of power.

Understood as both analytically and practically different from the questions pertaining to sovereignty, the term governmentality is utilized by Foucault in such a way so as to establish a historical break in the general framework for political theory. “[T]he art of government” Foucault writes must be “defined in a way that differentiates it from a certain capacity of the prince.”⁶¹⁶ For Foucault, then, within the history of political thought, the term governmentality suggests a historical change in political rationality from treatises regarding “advice to the prince” to treatises on the “art of government.”⁶¹⁷ Citing an early definition of the term “government” from the French emblem book writer, Guillaume de la Perrière’s 1555 text, *Le Miroir Polique*, Foucault argues that the problem of government has “a finality of its own,” and in this respect, “it [government] can be clearly distinguished from sovereignty.”⁶¹⁸ As clearly differentiated from political sovereignty, Foucault initially defines “government” as the “right manner of disposing things so as to lead not to the form of common good, as the jurists would have said, but to an end that is ‘convenient’ for each of the things that are to be governed.”⁶¹⁹ The turn toward the study of government as an analytic framework for political thought begins, for Foucault, by understanding governmentality in terms of both a rationality and series of multiform tactics utilized to achieve a specific end—that is, the problem of government is neither that of establishing legitimate sovereignty, nor of imposing laws, but of ordering and managing the relations between things. Thus, the problematic concerning the crisis of government is itself an enigma regarding (to use Foucault’s own phrasing) the order of things.

It is within the framework of governmentality (particularly as developed in “What is Critique?”) that the philosophical questions posed by Foucault in “What is Enlightenment?” are made more transparent in relation to the anarchist hypothesis of the political that underpins his thought. Indeed, in “What is Critique?” Foucault importantly

⁶¹⁶ Ibid, 204.

⁶¹⁷ Ibid, 201.

⁶¹⁸ Ibid, 211.

⁶¹⁹ Ibid, 211.

begins to discuss how the task of political philosophy is to develop a perpetual “critical attitude” in relation to the problem of government, and in doing so provides a lens for viewing the importance and coherence of the idea of resistance in his works as a whole.⁶²⁰ In the 1978 lecture, Foucault begins by outlining the ways in which the general thematics and questions of political theory historically change with the introduction of government as the basic problem in which philosophers must engage. According to Foucault, beginning in the 15th century, “there was a veritable explosion of the art of governing men,” which begins by developing the idea “quite foreign to ancient culture—that each individual, whatever his age or status, from the beginning to the end of his life and in his every action, had to be governed and had to let himself be governed.”⁶²¹ Indeed, if as Foucault suggests that the question “*how to govern* was...one of the fundamental questions about what was happening in the 15th or 16th centuries” (original emphasis), it is at this time that the problem of government becomes one of the crucial anchoring points in his thought.⁶²²

Yet, at the same time, however, (and this is what makes this lecture so essential) as the problem of government becomes a key focus for Foucault’s work, the question of government in the 1978 lecture is paired with and develops in relation to another key question which Foucault revitalizes and revises under the concept of the “critique.” As Taylor points out, the concept of “critique...emerges in response and is inextricably linked to the spread of governmentalizing techniques.”⁶²³ In this way, what Foucault traces under the heading of “critique” must be understood directly in relation to the study of governmentality; however, as it develops in relation to the problematic of government, the concept of “critique” acts as a way to radically introduce the notion of resistance as the key concept through which this notion of “critique” can be elaborated. Thus, in a key passage, Foucault writes “[s]o, this governmentalization, which seems to me to be rather characteristic of these societies in Western Europe in the 16th century, cannot apparently be dissociated from the question ‘how not to be governed?’.”⁶²⁴ It is this political

⁶²⁰ Michel Foucault, “What is Critique?”, 43.

⁶²¹ Ibid, 43.

⁶²² Ibid, 44.

⁶²³ Diana Taylor, “Practices of the Self,” 178.

⁶²⁴ Michel Foucault, “What is Critique?”, 44.

dimension of “critique” directed toward the question “how not to be governed,” in which Foucault claims gives rise a specific “historical dimension” of politics traditionally overlooked by philosophers and political theorists.⁶²⁵ Furthermore, it is within this critical question—referred to here as the “perpetual question—of “how not to be governed” that Foucault importantly suggests that “one could approximately locate therein what we would call the critical attitude.”⁶²⁶ Crucially, then, the location of the “critical attitude”—which as we have seen marks a key concept in Foucault’s thought—is to be found and situated in the historical expressions of the “art of not being governed.” As developed nearly six years prior to the Enlightenment lecture, what Foucault defines here as the “critical attitude” becomes manifest and is elaborated not in terms of struggle against authority but, more specifically, as an “adversary to the arts of governing”—that is, “critique,” which as we have seen is the very task of philosophy for Foucault, now finds its political context within a critical ethos elaborated in terms of an “art of not being governed.”⁶²⁷ By locating the ethos of “critique” within the “art of not being governed,” Foucault begins to radically reframe history of the political in a vastly different manner that begins to afford primacy to the question of resistance.

In this way, if as Colin Gordon argues that the “governmental theme has a focal point in Foucault’s later philosophy,” then at the same time, this “focal point” ought not to be divorced from another series of questions located within the space he reserves for the “critical attitude.”⁶²⁸ To be sure, any reconsideration of the political possibilities afforded in Foucault’s thought necessarily requires not simply the consideration of the political problem of governmentality, but also the parallel counter-history of the “the art of not being governed.” Against, then, the context of more traditional understandings of politics Foucault poses a counter-historical “political and moral attitude, a way of thinking” which, as a “first definition of critique,” assumes the following “general characterization: the art of not being governed quite so much.”⁶²⁹ Here, it is clear that

⁶²⁵ Ibid, 44.

⁶²⁶ Ibid, 44.

⁶²⁷ Ibid, 45.

⁶²⁸ Colin Gordon, “Governmental Rationality: An Introduction,” in *The Foucault Effect: Studies in Governmentality*, ed. Graham Burchell, Colin Gordon and Peter Miller (London: Harvester-Wheatsheaf, 1991), 2.

⁶²⁹ Michel Foucault, “What is Critique?”, 45.

Foucault affirms a direct link between “critique” and resistance, wherein the notion of “critique” is accordingly defined as a specific art of not being governed. Similar to the ways in which the methodology of “anarchaeology” takes as its starting point the “non-necessity of power,” we can see here that “critique” begins with the non-necessity of government as the explicit starting point for a critical theory of politics. Despite the importance Foucault ascribes to the relation between “critique” and the “art of not being governed,” critics engaging with the 1978 lecture often tend to discount the possible connection to anarchism in Foucault’s discussion of “critique.”⁶³⁰ Yet, while Foucault indeed remarks that the critical attitude does not mean that “governmentalization would be opposed in a kind of face-off by the opposite affirmation he does provide a general outline of what he means here by defining critique in terms of a specific “art of not being governed.”⁶³¹ The critical attitude of the art of not being governed is, as Foucault maintains, a permanent “adversary to the arts of governing”—that is, it is characterized in terms of “an act of defiance...a challenge...a way of limiting these arts of governing and sizing them up, transforming them... [or] finding a way to escape from them.”⁶³² As a permanent “adversary” to the art of governing, what Foucault outlines under “critique” can never be divorced from the very structure of the political; instead, rather the critical attitude of the art of not being governed—that is, the very historicity of revolt—is a constituent component of the domain of the political.

With this preliminary definition acting as the locus from which to understand the political context of “critique,” Foucault additionally employs three “historical anchoring points” as examples of what he refers to as the art of not being governed.⁶³³ Foucault first traces the birth of the critical attitude in relation to the arts of governing that were still grounded in the authority of the church: “not wanting to be governed was a certain way of refusing, challenging, limiting ecclesiastical rule.”⁶³⁴ Second, the counter-

⁶³⁰ For example, see: Marc Djaballah, “Foucault on Kant, Enlightenment, and Being Critical,” 269; Diana Taylor, “Practices of the Self,” 178-179; David Couzens-Hoy, *Critical Resistance*, 99; Judith Butler, “What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault’s Virtue,” 6. What is common amongst each of these theorists, is how they all tend to emphasize that what is at stake in Foucault’s notion of “critique” is not simply the “art of not being governed,” but rather the “art of not being governed *quite so much*” (my emphasis).

⁶³¹ Michel Foucault, “What is Critique?,” 44.

⁶³² Ibid, 44-45.

⁶³³ Ibid, 43.

⁶³⁴ Ibid, 45.

practice of being governed is for Foucault a struggle against judicial and sovereign power rather than ecclesiastical rule. Hence, “not to want to be governed like that also means not wanting to accept these laws because they are unjust, because, by virtue of their antiquity or the more or less threatening ascendancy given them by today’s sovereign, they hide a fundamental legitimacy.”⁶³⁵ Yet precisely because the art of not being governed is “confronted with government and the obedience it stipulates,” then the attitude of being critical raises the question, according to Foucault, of “natural law” in which “critique means putting forth universal and infeasible rights to which every government...will have to submit.”⁶³⁶ Finally, “to not want to be governed” is as Foucault maintains “*not* accepting as true...what an authority tells you is true...but rather accepting it only if one considers valid the reasons for doing so” (original emphasis).⁶³⁷ Thus, in its third anchoring point, the art of not being governed “finds its anchoring point in the problem of certainty in its confrontation with authority.”⁶³⁸ It is with these three “historical anchoring points”—the ecclesiastical, the juridical and the epistemic, or the triadic problematic of the “sovereign, the law, [and] the authority of dogmatism”—that Foucault elevates the art of not being governed as something of “capital importance in the history of Western culture.”⁶³⁹

It is with this discussion of critique in relation to the general problematic of governmentality in which Foucault’s thought can be seen as formulating a new critical depth with regard to the ways in which to rethink both philosophy’s relationship to the question of politics and the very terms of the political. The struggle between, or what Foucault refers to, as the historical “interplay of governmentalization and critique” is what he takes as the basic model of the domain of the political and politics insofar as it is tied to the development of the “critical attitude.”⁶⁴⁰ Situated amongst the current task to think through the postanarchist and metapolitical possibilities of a politics located at a distance from the state, Foucault’s thought prefigures these critical turns with the advent of a simple, yet nonetheless highly consequential, hypothesis that reframes the general

⁶³⁵ Ibid, 46.

⁶³⁶ Ibid, 46.

⁶³⁷ Ibid, 46.

⁶³⁸ Ibid, 46.

⁶³⁹ Ibid, 47.

⁶⁴⁰ Ibid, 47.

task of what might be developed into a philosophy of politics. Against the history, both political and philosophical, which sought to elaborate the question of politics in terms of regimes of government, advice to the prince, or the problem of sovereignty—in short against the arts of governing, which have always been the history of the archipolitical—Foucault asks if there might not be another way to think through the problem of politics and the domain of the political *beginning* with the art of not being governed. Indeed, with the development of this concept of “critique,” Foucault unmask a certain agonistic logic of struggle hidden beneath the problematic governmentality which allows him to offer a fundamental reinterpretation of the structure of the political. The historical elaboration of the problem of government is both consequently and simultaneously the history of its impossibility—or *the perpetual manifestation of the art of not being governed, which reveals, animates and gives presence to the perpetual “critical attitude” that haunts the historical problematic of governmentality.*

In addition to beginning to rethink the terms of the political and the question of politics from the space of the art of not being governed, the struggle between governmentality and critique also marks an important synthesis or critical nexus binding together the three general problematics of Foucault’s thought to the question of resistance. If as Foucault suggests in a 1982 essay titled “The Subject and Power” that the goal of his work has not simply been to analyze the problem of power, but instead to “create the history of the different modes by which, in our culture, beings are made subjects,” then the classification of his thought into three successive periods might be understood to correspond, as Foucault suggests here, with “three modes of objectification that transform human beings into subjects.”⁶⁴¹ As outlined in “The Subject and Power,” Foucault discusses the way in which the problem of his archaeological period is to demonstrate the way in which the subject of discourse becomes a subject as such in relation to a problem of truth and discursive practices; the problem of his genealogical works focuses on the problem of subjectivity and power; and his final ethical periods focus on the problem of subjectivity, its relation to the self, and its possible transformation. Truth, power, and the subject—with these three general thematics, Foucault provides a useful analytic tool for drawing connections amongst the different

⁶⁴¹ Michel Foucault, “The Subject and Power,” 326.

periods of his thought. At the same time, however, what is crucial is that it is these three problems which characterize the wide breadth of Foucault's work are all rearticulated in relation to the coinciding problematics of governmentality and critique.

Turning to a crucial passage from "What is Critique?," Foucault suggests not only that the problem of government helps to elaborate the questions of truth, power, and the subject, but also that the question of critique—that is, of the "art of not being governed"—is additionally posed in relation to these three general problematics comprising the whole of his work. For Foucault, then:

the core of critique is basically made of the bundle of relationships that are tied to one another...power, truth and the subject. And if governmentalization is indeed this movement through which individuals are subjected in the reality of a social practice through mechanisms of power that adhere to a truth, well, then! I will say that critique is the movement by which the subject gives himself the right to question truth on its effects of power and question power on its discourses of truth. Well, then! critique will be the art of voluntary insubordination, that of reflected intractability. Critique would essentially insure the desubjugation of the subject in the context of what we could call, in a word, the politics of truth.⁶⁴²

The ethical relation between critique and "desubjugation of the subject" will be dealt with in chapter six. Yet, it is essential here to point towards the ways in which Foucault frames the trajectory of his collected works, as well as the coinciding thematic problems associated with the differing periods of his work, not only to the movement of governmentalization (as is often the focal point), but also the counter-movement of "critique," or what is interestingly referred to here as the movement of "voluntary insubordination." Crucially, while critics tend to focus on the ways in which Foucault's analytics of power tend to override the possibility of agency and transformation, here we see that Foucault inscribes the possibility of radical agency into the heart of his work with the concept of "critique."⁶⁴³ With "critique," acting as the continuous thread throughout his work, Foucault importantly inscribes the art of not being governed as a key focal point for his thought; it is through the concept of "critique" and the coinciding question

⁶⁴² Michel Foucault, "What is Critique?", 47.

⁶⁴³ See note 628 above.

of “how not to be governed” that one can begin to reread the general focus of Foucault’s collected works. Furthermore, while Foucault is often criticized for understanding the subject as socially constructed by, and thus structurally bound, to the very forms of power he criticizes, with the notion of “critique” he provides an alternative framework from which to understand the problem of subjectivity, in which what is at stake is not the subject of power, but the “desubjugation of the subject” made possible through the position of “voluntary insubordination.”⁶⁴⁴ Here, rather than focusing on the ways in which relations of power create subjects, Foucault interestingly demonstrates that radical transformations in subjectivity are made possible not through power, but through resistance, or a unique form of political praxis as “voluntary insubordination.”

As we saw in the 1984 lecture, Foucault’s poses a general problematic in relation to one’s voluntary submission to authority, and his counter-concept of “voluntary insubordination” as invoked here revisits this idea. Foucault’s choice of words here importantly invokes the political problem of “voluntary servitude”—first articulated by one of the founders of modern political philosophy in France, Étienne De La Boétie.⁶⁴⁵

⁶⁴⁴ Foucault often makes claims that one of the key ramifications of power is the way in which it individualizes, and thus constitutes the subject as its vital effect. Thus, as Foucault writes in *Society Must Be Defended*, “the individual is in fact a power-effect”—that is for Foucault, “power passes through the individuals it has constituted” (30). Orthodox critics of Foucault often criticize him for this very construction, arguing that if the subject is in fact that which is created by and through power that Foucault revokes any possible agency. Yet given that Foucault builds resistance and the possibility of freedom into power relations from the start, one can also point toward, as Foucault does, that resistance to power is also what forms the basis of subjectivity.

⁶⁴⁵ See: Étienne De La Boétie, “The Discourse of Voluntary Servitude,” in *The Politics of Obedience and Étienne De La Boétie*, trans. Harry Kurz (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2007), 109-150. Although Foucault does not cite La Boétie directly, it is clear that he is attempting to engage with and invoke an alternative political tradition from which he might be able to locate a basis to situate the “critical attitude” of the “art of not being governed.” Furthermore, given the way in which Foucault historically locates the development of the critical attitude of the “art of not being governed” as arising with particular emphasis in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, La Boétie’s text can be seen as directly intervening and participating in the tradition Foucault hopes to reinvigorate. Often overlooked by traditional political philosophers, La Boétie’s text, *Discourse on Voluntary Servitude* importantly presents a central problem for political theory that inverts the traditional manner in which the political is theorized. La Boétie’s problematic of “voluntary servitude” cuts to the heart of and fundamentally reworks the tradition of political theory based on either advice to political leaders or theories seeking to legitimate sovereignty. With the notion of “voluntary servitude” La Boétie argues that the central problem of political philosophy must be elaborated around the problematic of political obedience—that is, for La Boétie, the principal problem that haunts political philosophy is why people willingly obey the commands of government. In his investigations to the problematic of authoritarian governance and our voluntary submission to it, La Boétie radically rethinks the domain of the political in such a way that it begins with the position of disobedience. The call for mass disobedience that frames La Boétie’s text, has often been recognized as

Written in the middle of the sixteenth century, la Boétie's short text, *Discourse of Voluntary Servitude* (1550) is often considered a seminal text in the historical development of anarchist thought, and Foucault's reference to this text is helpful in further outlining the ways in which the development of the critical attitude begins to posit an anarchist hypothesis of the political.⁶⁴⁶ La Boétie's treatise utilizes the notion of "voluntary servitude" in order to preliminarily rethink the domain of the political from the opposite position to the problematic of sovereignty and archipolitical governmentality as later elaborated in the works of traditional philosophers such as Bodin and Hobbes. The treatise is coherently structured around a single problematic that inverts the entire tradition of Western political theory: according to La Boétie, the principle question political theory must engage with—a question that is still essential to contemporary thought, and one that Foucault directly attempts to reinvigorate—is why people willingly allow themselves to be governed.⁶⁴⁷

As a key problematic posed in the *Discourse of Voluntary Servitude*, La Boétie addresses the voluntary subjective bond which ties us to that which dominates us. In thinking through the problem of "voluntary servitude," what is stake for La Boétie is that political power and coinciding question of government does not simply rely on coercion as a tactic oriented toward obedience but, more fundamentally, on our voluntary

an early example of anarchist political philosophy, and insofar as Foucault invokes this tradition in order to situate the critical attitude of the "art of not being governed," the reference is helpful in articulating the way in which he builds the anarchist hypothesis into his work.

⁶⁴⁶ It is not surprising that the call for mass disobedience which frames La Boétie's text, has been considered integral and seminal to the historical development of anarchist thought, and several prominent anarchist thinkers such as Thoreau, Tolstoy and Tucker, amongst others, have utilized La Boétie's analysis as a focal point for their own works. Regarding the influence of La Boétie's work in relation to anarchist theory see: Murray Rothbard's introductory essay, "The Political Thought of Etienne De La Boétie" in *The Politics of Obedience and Etienne De La Boétie*, ed. Paul Boonin (New York: Black Rose Books, 2007), 10-12. Indeed, given the influence La Boétie has had on the development of anarchist thought, several anarchist historians have additionally pointed toward the ways in which La Boétie's treatise prefigures what later would be developed as the philosophical and ethical basis of anarchism. For the historical influence of La Boétie's text in regard to anarchism see: Peter Marshall, *Demanding the Impossible: A History of Anarchism* (London: Harper Collins, 1992), 109-112. Postanarchist Saul Newman has more recently revisited La Boétie's text in order to suggest that the problem of voluntary servitude still haunts political theory, and as such must be addressed in contemporary currents of anarchist theory. See: Saul Newman, "Voluntary Servitude Reconsidered." In *Anarchist Developments in Cultural Studies*, 1. (2010): 31-47.

⁶⁴⁷ Etienne De La Boétie, *Discourse on Voluntary Servitude*, 116. Here, La Boétie writes that "it is therefore the inhabitants themselves who permit, or, rather, bring about, their own subjection, since by ceasing to submit they would put an end to their servitude."

submission to power. In other words, our agential voluntary submission to power is, at the same time, precisely what constitutes the basis for the continuation of political power as such. Thus, rather than reducing the question of the political and politics to the agency of political power, La Boétie redistributes agency to the people who allow themselves to be governed. According to La Boétie, “[i]t is therefore the inhabitants themselves who permit, or, rather, bring about, their own subjection, since by ceasing to submit they would put an end to their servitude.”⁶⁴⁸ For La Boétie, then, if power depends upon our submission to it in order to constitute itself as such, then in order to resist the continuation of political power, what is required is the active withdrawal of our submission to political authority. Through the development of what Foucault refers to as “voluntary insubordination” which begins with the proposition “[r]esolve to serve no more, and you are at once freed,”⁶⁴⁹ La Boétie radically inverts the political tradition based upon the primacy of the archipolitical. Indeed, rather than assuming the necessity of obedience to governments, which for theorists like Hobbes, is a necessary component for the continuation of sovereignty, La Boétie begins from the position directly opposed to the history of the archipolitical, starting with primacy of freedom which, as he suggests “we are not only in possession of” but also “have urge to defend.”⁶⁵⁰ Although La Boétie’s treatise is set to investigate what he considers to be a vital problem traditionally ignored by political theorists, his analysis offers only a preliminary outline from which a thought of the political might emerge in line with Foucault. Nonetheless, it is with reference to both the idea that the questions pertaining to the domain of the political might alternatively be rethought beginning from position of freedom and the will to defend it that Foucault takes as the basis for a fundamental reevaluation of the political.

Through asserting the problematic of “voluntary insubordination” as a vital core to the elaboration of the “critical attitude,” it is clear that Foucault directly attempts to invoke and continue in the tradition initially articulated by La Boétie. Given that

⁶⁴⁸ Ibid, 116.

⁶⁴⁹ Ibid, 118-119.

⁶⁵⁰ Ibid, 120. According to La Boétie, liberty is primary with regard to the problem of government. Thus La Boétie writes: “it is therefore fruitless to argue whether or not liberty is natural, since none can be held in slavery without being wronged, and in a world governed by a nature, which is reasonable, there is nothing so contrary as an injustice. Since freedom is our natural state, we are not only in possession of it but have the urge to defend it” 120.

Foucault builds the notion of “voluntary insubordination” as a vital element of the notion of critique—wherein what is insured is the space in which the problematic of governmentality can be both questioned and undermined—into the core of his thought, the critical problem of the “art of not being governed,” I suggest, constitutes not only the hidden locus of his thought, but a radical reframing of the terms of the political anarchically. To recreate a theory of the political—which, as we have seen, is the fundamental task Foucault ascribes to the elaboration of the “critical attitude”—requires, then, with regard to La Boétie, a different topology of the political that begins in a radical condition of freedom on the one hand, and a voluntary agential will to resist—indeed to withdrawal from—the manifestation of government on the other. Indeed, by turning, once again, to the essay “The Subject and Power” we can directly see how Foucault invokes La Boétie’s problematic in order to reframe the political from the point of view resistance. If, for La Boétie, “voluntary servitude” marks the fundamental condition of government, Foucault suggests to the contrary that we ought to begin with the problem of resistance in order to avoid the condition of voluntary servitude. In this regard, Foucault writes:

The power relationship and freedom’s refusal to submit cannot therefore be separated. The crucial problem of power is not that of voluntary servitude (how could we seek to be slaves?). At the very heart of the power relationship, and constantly provoking it, are the recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom. Rather than speaking of an essential antagonism, it would be better to speak of an agonism of a relationship that is at the same time mutual incitement and struggle; less of a face-to-face confrontation that paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation.⁶⁵¹

In a similar manner to how the art of government can never be divorced from the critical question pertaining to “how not to be governed,” we see here that the question of power cannot be separated from “freedom’s refusal to submit.” This is to suggest that, according to Foucault, the manifestation of power always meets with the potential of its own resistance, or the refusal to willingly submit to power. Insofar as freedom is itself the precondition for both power and government, this means for Foucault that “power is

⁶⁵¹ Michel Foucault, “Subject and Power,” 342.

exercised only over free subjects, and only insofar as they are free.”⁶⁵² In other words, if as Foucault maintains that power must be understood as the “government of men by other men,” then the very problematic of government necessarily “includes an important element: freedom.”⁶⁵³ Yet, consequently, insofar as freedom’s refusal to submit is itself a precondition of government, the domain of the political cannot therefore be reduced simply to the primacy of government; the precondition of power and the manifestation of government is itself marked by the permanent potential of resistance within the field of freedom. This means for Foucault that the very permanence of the political is attested to by the ongoing struggle between relations of power and governmentality and the art of not being governed which, insofar as it acts as the very precondition of power and government attains a position of primacy in relation to the field of the political.

Precisely because of this, the problem of the political is, as Foucault suggests here, not therefore simply a problem of “voluntary servitude”—which overemphasizes the role of power at the expense of resistance. Instead, rather, what is at stake for Foucault—indeed, what lies at the “very heart of the power relationship”—is the problematic of resistance, or the simultaneity between the “recalcitrance of the will and the intransigence of freedom” which, when taken together, invert La Boétie’s critique of “voluntary servitude” to what Foucault’s theory of “voluntary insubordination.” It is from this alternative position that Foucault begins to reframe the domain of the political not as an “essential antagonism,” but in terms of an ongoing “agonism,” or, “permanent provocation” which begins with, and takes as its very basis, the problematic of resistance as the referent for reframing the substance of the political. It is this retheorization of the political that Foucault places as one of the central tasks for political theory. Foucault writes: “I would say that the analysis, elaboration, and bringing into question of power relations and the ‘agonism’ between power relations and the intransitivity of freedom is an increasingly political task—even, the political task that is inherent in all social existence.”⁶⁵⁴

⁶⁵² Ibid, 342.

⁶⁵³ Ibid, 342.

⁶⁵⁴ Ibid, 343.

If according to Foucault, the task in which political theorists must engage not only revolves around the question of power, but also an analysis of the fundamental agonism between power and resistance, then the elaboration of the “art of not being governed”—which as he suggests in the 1978 lecture “has nothing to do with philosophy of history or the history of philosophy,” but is instead grounded in the framework of “historical-philosophical practice”—is one of the key problems with which philosophy must attempt to engage.⁶⁵⁵ For Foucault, rather than a philosophical “investigation into the legitimacy of the historical modes of knowing,” or the political investigation into the effects of political power understood as “unique principle” and “domination,” what is at stake in the “historical-philosophical” element of “critique” is that the question of both philosophy and politics ought to be understood in terms of a strategic reversal, a reversal which begins as an art of not being governed.⁶⁵⁶ In this way, Foucault suggests that in order to adequately engage in the question of the political, “[o]ne always has to think about it [the political] in such a way as to see how it is associated with a domain of possibility and consequently, of reversibility, of possible reversal.”⁶⁵⁷ By rethinking the question of politics in terms of a “domain of possibility” in which the problem of government continuously comes into contact with its “possible reversal,” Foucault’s thought affirms the meta-political search for a theory of the political that cannot simply be reduced to the problem of governmentality and the state. Indeed, the historical-philosophical practice of critique for Foucault is what makes possible and reframes the terms of the political as the movement of resistance; critique is the political theory which turns on a critical conception of resistance as the precondition for power relations as such. For Foucault, what is at stake in the questions regarding both philosophy and politics is not the search for “transcendental or semi-transcendental” conditions of possibility that give primacy to the history of the archipolitical, but instead the critical topology in which the problems of authority and governmentality might be reversed.⁶⁵⁸ Foucault thus writes that the question posed for politics is:

⁶⁵⁵ Michel Foucault, “What is Critique?”, 55.

⁶⁵⁶ Ibid, 59; 66.

⁶⁵⁷ Ibid, 66.

⁶⁵⁸ Ibid, 66.

[n]o longer through what error, illusion, or illegitimacy has knowledge come to induce effects of domination manifested in the modern world...but how can they instead be reversed or released from within a concrete strategic field, this concrete strategic field that induced them, *starting with this decision not to be governed* (my emphasis).⁶⁵⁹

By reframing the basis of political philosophy in terms of a strategic “decision not to be governed,” Foucault crucially builds what I refer to as the anarchist hypothesis of the political into the core of his collected works, while simultaneously invoking what I will trace in the following chapter as the *primacy of resistance*. What I refer to here as the anarchist hypothesis of the political does not simply mean that Foucault argues that the concept of the political cannot be reduced to the question of governmentality, but that in its non-reducibility to the problem of government, the political is itself that which *starts* with the critical “decision not to be governed.” In other words, the domain of the political, for Foucault, is itself, what pivots not only on the question, but the permanent potentiality of resistance, a perpetual agonism between governmentalization and the counter-history of the art of not being governed which makes visible the domain of the political as such. At the same time as Foucault locates a structure of permanent agonism at the heart of the political, he additionally posits an alternative methodological framework from which to reread the history of the political in such a way that places the art of not being governed in a primary relation with the history of governmentalization.

With “What is Critique?” it is my contention that the ways in which Foucault suggests how the questions of politics and the political might be rethought from a position starting with a decisive will not to be governed, designates a unique political rationality opposed to the traditional logic of the *archē*. Whereas, the notion of critique outlined in “What is Enlightenment?” is utilized in order to invoke a radical task for philosophy that, takes as its starting point, the irreducible critique of authority, in “What is Critique?” this “critical attitude” is coupled with and turns upon a “decisive will not to be governed.” Indeed, with the concept of critique, it is my contention that Foucault at once invokes the concept of resistance as the critical agent that binds together his critical inquiries in to power, politics, and governmentality, as well as the key problematic to be

⁶⁵⁹ Ibid, 66.

developed throughout his work. Taken together, then, the element of “critique” in Foucault’s thought functions so as to anchor resistance not only as the central—indeed vital—component of his studies of power and governmentality, but also to his thought as a whole. Furthermore, with the concept of “critique,” Foucault builds an anarchist hypothesis of the political in to the very core of his thought, not in terms of a fundamental anarchism, but rather in terms of a critical methodology, or “anarchaeology” which, in beginning with the non-necessity of power, refuses the traditional logic of the archē. In addition, then, to the philosophical component of “critique,” which as I argued in the previous section begins with a radical critique of authority, this then is the other way in which we can now begin to posit a second element of the anarchist hypothesis that underpins Foucault’s thought. *Arising from the intersection between an irreducible critique of authority and a decisive will not to be governed, the domain of the political can be redefined as the field pertaining to and marked by the permanence of resistance; as a permanent an ongoing sphere of agonism between the art of governing and the art of not being governed, resistance composes the substance of the political, and is therefore the condition of possibility for the political as such. This means, however, both that resistance is primary in relation to the history of the political and is that which makes visible the political as such.*

In chapter one, I cited a passage from Benjamin Tucker’s text, *Individual, Society, and the State* in which he claims that a philosophy of politics is made possible only upon articulating a key distinction between government and resistance. A reconsideration of this passage can now be posed in light of the intervention I think Foucault makes in regard to this tradition. Tucker writes: “the distinction between invasion and resistance, between government and defense is vital. Without it there can be no valid philosophy of politics.”⁶⁶⁰ It is now clear that Foucault’s critical thought attempts to rethink the possibility of a philosophy of politics in terms of vital distinction between government and resistance, and as such can be understood as contributing to the anarchist tradition invoked by Tucker. The distinction between governmentality and the critical attitude generated around the question “how not to be governed” acts as both the framework and referent from which a new political theory that does not culminate in the problematic of

⁶⁶⁰ Benjamin Tucker, “The Individual, Society, and the State,” 22.

governmentality might emerge. Yet, while Tucker and Foucault collide in rethinking the possibility of a philosophy of politics derived from a key distinction between governmentality and resistance—that is, between the art of governing and the art of not being governed—what makes Foucault’s theory particularly significant is not simply the distinction between government and resistance, but how the question of politics can be *released* from the tradition of the archē *starting* with a decisive will not to be governed. In other words, Foucault redefines the political not simply in terms of a distinction between archipolitical and the an-archipolitical, but from the perspective that affords primacy to the question of resistance itself. In this way, Foucault does not reframe the political in terms of static dualisms between the state and non-state, government and anarchy, or resistance and power; instead rather, starting with the decisive will not to be governed Foucault reveals that resistance designates the condition of possibility of power and politics. Reframing the domain of the political from the point of view of resistance means that the potentiality for resistance is the anarchic spacing that provides the irreducible condition to both confront and escape the history of governmentality, and as such acts as the key referent from which a new thought of the political might arise that could never assume the form of an archē. Precisely because Foucault rethinks the problem of the political through resistance, his theory also invokes and even turns upon anarchism; resistance as the very substance of the political invokes anarchism not in terms of a prescriptive outline for a future society to come, but a gesture that embodies the disruption of the archē that has hitherto grounded the political and the question of politics within the space of government.

At the same time, however, as Foucault’s thought can be seen as directly invoking an affinity with anarchist political theory through the concept of “critique” and the coinciding problematic of the art of not being governed, I must be careful in asserting an immediate relationship between anarchist political theory and what Foucault develops through the problematic of critique and resistance. Although a certain affinity between Foucault and anarchism might now appear more transparent in regard to what I have outlined thematically under “the art of not being governed,”—a problematic that finds its expression and framework within the history of anarchism—critics of Foucault have continuously denied the possibility of this very connection. Noting the bewilderedness

and general confusion arising from the attendees of Foucault's 1978 lecture concerning the critical discourse of the "art of not being governed," biographer James Miller writes that "[t]he philosophers in his audience were struck by the strangeness of this conclusion, particularly coming from Michel Foucault."⁶⁶¹ Traditionally, critics have continued to be perplexed by Foucault's remarks throughout this lecture, and subsequent theorists often discount or outright deny the possibility of a relation to anarchism that underpins Foucault's work. In particular, certain theorists have pointed out how the "unqualified will not to be governed" Foucault speaks of in the lecture from 1978 contradicts his earlier work in which "there was never an anarchistic will not to governed at all."⁶⁶² Even those sympathetic to both anarchism and Foucault, such as Judith Butler, have denied the possibility of anarchist politics arising from elaboration of the "critique" and the "art of not being governed." As Butler writes in her short essay on the idea of "critique" in Foucault's thought, through the framework of the "art of not being governed," Foucault "is not posing the possibility of radical anarchy, and that the question ['how not to be governed'] is not how to become radically ungovernable."⁶⁶³ Yet as we have seen, this is not the position Foucault takes in regard to the problem of "critique." Instead of positing an essential foundation from which the art of not being governed arises historically, Foucault maintains to the contrary that what is at stake is to rethink the very structure of power relations, governmentality, and domain of the political with regard to the primacy of resistance. Nevertheless, to make her claim, Butler turns to the question and answer period following the lecture "What is Critique?," where Foucault is asked whether or not his expression—"the art of not being governed—depends either on positing anarchism as a sort of essential "foundation" against the monolithic project of governmentality, or whether the expression culminates in resistance as a political practice.⁶⁶⁴ Foucault's response is crucial in outlining precisely what he means by that art

⁶⁶¹ James Miller, *The Passion of Michel Foucault*, 304.

⁶⁶² David Couzens Hoy, *Critical Resistance*, 99.

⁶⁶³ Judith Butler, "What is Critique? An Essay on Foucault's Virtue", 6.

⁶⁶⁴ Butler is referring to the question posed by Jean-louis Bruch which is posed as follows: "I would like to ask a question about an expression which is central to your presentation, but which was formulated in two ways which seemed different to me. At the end, you spoke of "the decision-making will not to be governed" as a foundation or a reversal of the *Aufklärung* which was the subject of your talk. In the beginning, you spoke of "not being governed *like that*," of "not being governed so much," of "not being governed at such a price." In one case, the expression is absolute, in the other it is relative, and according

of not being governed and its possible relation to anarchist theory. Strikingly, Foucault's response reveals a fundamental similarity between critique and what he in 1980 refers to as "anarchaeology," whereby he refuses to exclude the possible of a critical anarchism in his work.

Although, Foucault's critics typically turn to his answer at the end of his 1978 lecture in order to deny the more radical nature of some of his claims, the way in which he responds to this question helps to both unpack what he means by the "decision not to be governed" and how his general thought does not hinge upon a fundamental anarchism, but rather upon the question of anarchy as manifest in the history of resistance. Indeed, whereas Butler denies both the possibility of anarchism as a critical framework for Foucault's thought, his response directly invokes these two positions in a way that cannot be overlooked. Foucault's response is as follows:

I do not think that the will not to be governed at all is something that one could consider an originary aspiration. I think that, in fact, the will not to be governed is always the will not to be governed thusly, like that, by these people, at this price. As for the expression of not being governed at all, I believe it is the philosophical and theoretical paroxysm of something that would be this will not to be relatively governed...I was not referring to something that would be a fundamental anarchism, that would be like an originary freedom, absolutely and wholeheartedly resistant to any governmentalization. I did not say it, but this does not mean that I absolutely exclude it.⁶⁶⁵

Similar to the way in which Foucault argues that "anarchaeology" begins with the "non-necessity of power" as the theoretical standpoint that allows him rethink the analytics of power and government, here we see that the expression of the art of not being governed is where Foucault locates the historical specificity of this non-necessity of power, or, anarchaeological approach to the study of politics. What is at stake for Foucault in thinking through the significance of the philosophical and political expression of "not

to what criteria? Is it because of having felt the abuse of governmentalization that you come to the radical position, "the decision-making will not to be governed." I am asking this question, and finally doesn't this last position need to be in turn the object of an investigation, a questioning that would in essence, be philosophical" (WC 75).

⁶⁶⁵ Michel Foucault, "What is Critique?", 75.

being governed at all” lies not in posing a “fundamental anarchism” that invokes a monolithic and universal “originary freedom” against the history of governmentality. Instead rather, and this is crucial, what is at stake in the expression the “art of not being governed” first emerges in posing the question of anarchism in terms of *the relative and historical specificity of resistance*; the art of not being governed invokes an affinity with anarchism not as a fundamental foundation, but as the expressions manifest, in all their relative historical specificity, of the manifestations of resistance. Foucault thus inscribes revolt into the history of politics—that is, revolt has a historicity of its own, and as such a theory of the political must include the principle of revolt as a vital component. This is why Foucault continuously reiterates that the political will not to be governed is “always the will not to be governed thusly,” and yet, at the same time, this “will not to be governed” is according to Foucault the historical condition of politics, and as such cannot be divorced from the very structure of the political.

Insofar as the art of not being governed always arises in particular historical, social, and political contexts, what Foucault develops through the problematic of critique is neither the prescription of a general political theory, nor the description of a fundamental essentialism “resistant to governmentalization,” but the preliminary elaboration of a theory of politics in which what must be explored is the political question of resistance. At the same time, however, as Foucault significantly points toward here, the “expression of not being governed at all” is additionally demarcated as a “philosophical and theoretical *paroxysm*” which although does not necessarily rely upon a “fundamental anarchism,” cannot fully “exclude it” either. As we saw in Foucault’s description of “anarchaeology,” his methodology does not fully exclude the possibility of anarchism as a critical link in his thought and work; here, in a strikingly similar manner, Foucault once again reiterates that his critical theory of “critique” and the ethics of “the art of not being governed” cannot fully exclude the possibility of anarchism. Foucault’s choice of words here helps to explain what initially appears as a fundamental contradiction endemic to this lecture. As a philosophical *paroxysm*—that is, as an uncontrollable emotion or attitude of “being critical”—the expression “not to be governed at all” invokes anarchism not as the essence of resistance, but as the “critical attitude” which, as we have seen, takes as its basis and starting point the decision not to

be governed, and as such acts as the critical turning point from the political can be interpreted anarchically through the permanence of resistance.

Rather than developing an inconsistent framework for critical thought, the expression “not to be governed at all” has both a historical-political dimension and a coinciding philosophical attitude. For Foucault, then, there are thus two dimensions developed through the concept of critique which required for an anarchist theory of politics and a radical reframing of the terms of the political. Thus, in his concluding response to the question posed to Foucault at the end of the 1978 lecture, he writes: “[i]f we were to explore this dimension of critique”—that is, if we are to explore the critical question *how not to be governed*—“would we not then find that it is supported by something akin to the historical practice of revolt, the non-acceptance of a real government, on the one hand, or, on the other, the individual experience of the refusal of governmentality.”⁶⁶⁶ Rather than a “fundamental anarchism” or essential substance from which resistance arises, the art of not being governed is what emerges in practices of revolt; it is this historicity of revolt and not an essential ground for resistance, that Foucault urges us to take as the basic analytic framework for a new thought of the political. It is at the intersection of these two axes—the critical position that begins with a “non-acceptance of real government” and the coinciding form of politics of resistance to governmentality—that what I have referred to as the anarchist hypothesis of the political arises in Foucault’s thought. A politics and coinciding political theory that does not culminate in rationality of governmentality which, as we have seen for Foucault, is the task of philosophy, cannot be divorced from the historical and philosophical question of resistance, and it is with this logic—the logic that the political will is a will not to be governed—that Foucault’s thought develops and *begins* with an anarchist hypothesis of the political.

3.4 Towards a Theory of the Primacy of Resistance

That the history of political thought which, traditionally reduces the questions of politics and the terms of the political to the manifestation of the archipolitical, might be radically

⁶⁶⁶ Ibid, 75.

rethought through the critical framework of the “art of not being governed” is one of Foucault’s greatest contributions to political theory. Indeed, consequent upon, the ways in which the analytic and material framework for political theory traditionally affords primacy to the problematic of government, the importance of Foucault’s intervention arises in both his critical exploration of a history of politics conditioned by resistance while at the same time redefining and locating the basis for critical philosophy from the position of resistance. Focusing on this interplay between these two ideas, David Couzens Hoy usefully employs the terms “critical resistance,” or the idea that “critique without resistance is empty and resistance without critique is blind” to suggest a guiding thread in Foucault’s thought.⁶⁶⁷ Given that the general lacuna of Foucault’s thought is often articulated as being motivated from a critical inquiry into the problematic of power, we can now add that it is rather the concept of resistance that is divisive in understanding the complexities of his thought and his analytics of power and governmentality. In other words, if “Foucault is accepted as being a theorist of power,” then as Johanna Oksala correctly maintains “we also have to read him as a theorist of resistance.”⁶⁶⁸ To be sure, the interplay between critique and resistance—that is, of “critical resistance”—marks the general thread connecting the different periods characterizing Foucault’s thought, while at the same time demarcating a different framework in order to engage with a theory of the political beginning with the critical position that takes resistance as the primary domain of the political.

What is at stake in positing an anarchist hypothesis of the political at the base of Foucault’s thought is not simply that he introduces the notion of resistance as a concept which, although has been commonly neglected in the history of political thought, might be repositioned as a grand reversal to the problematic of governmentality. Rather, what is at stake is that resistance itself needs to be understood, analytically and practically, as an altogether different phenomenon than power, and as such requires a completely different analytic and methodological framework from which to understand the field of the political consequent to the permanence of resistance amongst the very dynamic of politics. It is in this way that what I have outlined as the anarchist hypothesis of the

⁶⁶⁷ David Couzens Hoy, *Critical Resistance*, 6.

⁶⁶⁸ Johanna Oksala, “Resistance,” 432.

political—or that which begins with the idea that the historical possibility of government can never be separated from the art of not being governed—demonstrates how Foucault’s works and methodology turn upon the development of the concept of resistance in two ways essential to the development of a new framework for a theory of the political emancipated from the problem of governmentality. Politically, resistance becomes manifest within the framework of the art of not being governed as the taking place or “experience of the refusal of governmentality,” while, philosophically, resistance is manifest in the critical attitude that takes the “non-acceptance of a real government” as the theoretical standpoint from which an analytic framework for the study of the political might begin. In both instances, what is at stake for Foucault, is that if a reanalysis of the terms of the political in its irreducibility to the state is possible, then one must *begin* with the question of resistance—that is, resistance must be articulated not only as analytically different in kind from power, but as *primary* with the history of governmentality, and therefore as the vital component of the domain of the political. *If a redefinition of the terms of the political beyond the principle of governmentality is possible—that is if an alternative philosophy of politics is possible—it is only through the logic of the primacy of resistance which, in its irreducibility to the history of the archipolitical, provides the condition to both confront and escape the history governmental rationality and practice. That is, if a critical theory of politics irreducible to the logic of the archē is possible, such a conception begins with an analysis of the counter-historical movements of resistance through which politics emerges as a distinct art of not being governed.*

This chapter has attempted, through a rereading of Foucault’s thought in relation to the development of the general problematic of “critique,” to reformulate a radically alternative framework from which to understand the domain of the political. By introducing the concept of resistance through the corresponding notion of “critique” I have argued that Foucault formulates a unique methodological framework from which reorient the notion of resistance as the primary component of the domain of the political. In doing so, I have not simply sought to draw connections between Foucault and the history of anarchist thought, but that Foucault builds an anarchist hypothesis of the political into the core of his thought. In this regard, we have seen that rather than reducing the sphere of the political to the historical operability of governmentality,

Foucault reverses the archic principle that has hitherto structured Western political thought, and as such takes the notion of resistance as the condition of possibility for the emergence of the political in its agonistic specificity. Secondly, I have also sought to elevate the notion of resistance as the crucial—indeed vital—concept that binds together the larger trajectory of Foucault’s thought, and therefore set forth the claim that resistance might subsequently allow for a new reading of Foucault’s collected works. Utilizing the framework provided by the intersection between “critique” and the “art of not being governed” developed throughout this chapter in order to both outline a unique relation between anarchism and Foucault, as well as a general framework from which the notion resistance is understood as an internal and ineliminable aspect of political theory, the following chapter is set to further elucidate and situate the concept of resistance as the central problem elaborated in Foucault’s analytic of power. More specifically, in the following chapter, it is my contention that what must be at stake in attempt to open the space for political theory and praxis situated at the horizon of governmentality, hinges on elaborating Foucault’s fifth thesis on power from the first volume of the *History of Sexuality* as the principle of intelligibility through which the questions of power and politics emerge as a unique paradigm of resistance.

Although Foucault does not explicitly draw the connection between his genealogy of being critical and what I will outline in the following chapter as the primacy of resistance, the dynamic between governmentalization and “critique” echoes the dynamic between power and resistance first sketched in the *History of Sexuality*. As I argue in the following chapter, Foucault’s thesis which posits that resistance must be understood as primary with power, incorporates a radical claim which reverses the essential being-political of politics. Taking the permanent interplay between governmentality and resistance as the very substance of politics, Foucault provides an alternative analytic grid or principle of intelligibility for a critical theory of the political which, in locating the question of resistance as the vital component of politics, reverses the paradigms of orthodox political theory. As such, whereas this chapter was set to outline the ways in which Foucault creates the philosophical and political framework from which to situate the concept of resistance as the vital principle through which the political can be understood anarchically, the following chapter more directly addresses

Foucault's theory of resistance—what I will elaborate as the primacy of resistance—as the hidden locus for political thought and politics.

Chapter 4

4 The Primacy of Resistance

If societies persist and live, that is, if the powers that be are not “utterly absolute,” it is because, behind all of the submissions and coercions, beyond the threats, the violence, and the intimidations, there is the possibility of that moment when life can no longer be bought, when the authorities can no longer do anything, and when, facing the gallows and the machine guns, people revolt.⁶⁶⁹

In order for power relations to come into play, there must be a certain degree of freedom on both sides... This means that in power relations there is necessarily the possibility of resistance because if there were no possibility of resistance (of violent resistance, flight, deception, strategies capable of reversing the situation), there would be no power relations at all.⁶⁷⁰

--Michel Foucault

In the previous chapter, I introduced the idea of “critique” as a vital concept within Foucault’s critical lexicon, and argued that through this concept Foucault both introduces the notion of resistance as the key concept developed throughout his thought, as well as the constituent component from which the field of the political can be rethought anarchically. More specifically, it was my contention that Foucault’s archaeological approach to the study of governmentality and the corresponding ethos of “critique” reveals a preliminary framework for developing what I refer to as an anarchist hypothesis of the political in which the history of government is simultaneously parallel with the counter-historical movements of resistance manifest in terms of an “art of not being governed.” Against the history of political thought which traditionally reduces both politics and the terms of the political to the paradigm of government and the primacy of the state, the ways in which the political might be rethought in terms of a permanent and ongoing struggle between the art of governing and the art of not being governed is Foucault’s greatest contributions to the history of political philosophy. With the notion of “critique” as such designating the philosophical framework for Foucault’s critical

⁶⁶⁹ Michel Foucault, “Useless to Revolt?” in *Power. Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, ed. James D. Faubion (New York: The New Press, 1994), 449-450.

⁶⁷⁰ Michel Foucault, “The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom,” in *Ethics, Subjectivity, and Truth. Essential Works of Foucault 1954-1984*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1997), 292.

inquiries into the studies of power, politics, and governmentality, the corresponding question of resistance is what helps formulate a unique solidarity between Foucault and anarchist theory. Indeed, consequent upon the ways in which the analytic and material framework for political theory traditionally affords primacy to the problematic of government, the importance of Foucault's intervention within anarchist political theory arises in both his critical exploration of a history of politics conditioned by resistance while at the same time redefining and locating the basis for a critical inquiry into the domain of the political from the perspective of resistance. Taking seriously the notion that an alternative theory of the political—indeed an anarchist hypothesis of the political—can be made in regard to the question of resistance, what is at stake in this chapter is that such a theory ultimately first finds its basis in Foucault's fifth thesis on power as initially proposed in *The History of Sexuality*.

Utilizing the theoretical space of the anarchist hypothesis of the political, this chapter discusses Foucault's important contribution to the often neglected questions pertaining to the relationship between politics, power, and resistance. Taking the permanent interplay between power and resistance as the principle of intelligibility of the power and politics, this chapter argues that Foucault's analytic of power in *The History of Sexuality* posits what I refer to as *the primacy of resistance*, in which the question of politics is reinvigorated and made possible only insofar as resistance is to be understood as a vital, permanent characteristic of power. In rereading Foucault's analytic of power from the perspective of resistance, the approach taken in this chapter goes against much of the conventional literature written on the question of power in *The History of Sexuality*. Standard interpretations generally read the text as pertaining to Foucault's ongoing "process of rethinking his analysis of modern power,"⁶⁷¹ and further that "Foucault's key claim" in *The History of Sexuality* is that "mechanisms of power in the West have been profoundly transformed" into what is referred to for the first time in this text as "biopower."⁶⁷² Thus, in their influential reading of Foucault, Dreyfus and Rabinow maintain that the "two interconnected concepts around which Foucault

⁶⁷¹ Richard A. Lynch, "Reading *The History of Sexuality*, Volume 1," in *A Companion to Foucault*, eds. Christopher Falzon, et al. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 159.

⁶⁷² Johanna Oksala, "From Biopower to Governmentality," in *A Companion to Foucault*, eds. Christopher Falzon, et al. (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2013), 321.

organizes his writings in the 1970s are the *repressive hypothesis* and *bio-technico-power*” (original emphasis).⁶⁷³ While it is incontestable that Foucault situates his thought in *The History of Sexuality* at the intersection between these theories of power, it is my contention that standard interpretations often neglect to notice how his changing analytic of power in this text is fundamentally framed within the context of rethinking the question of resistance amongst this dynamic, and further how the question of resistance ultimately changes how power can be conceived. Indeed, although the importance of the concept of “biopower” for Foucault should not be underestimated, the attention given by scholars to the final chapter, “The Right of Death and the Power over Life,” has overshadowed the importance Foucault attributes to the theory of resistance underlying his changing analytic of power at this time. As I will argue, insofar as resistance is understood by Foucault as a constituent component of power and politics, then a critical theory of the political can no longer rely on the paradigms of government and sovereignty as the basic point of departure for the study of politics and power relations as such. Rather than reducing Foucault’s work in *The History of Sexuality* to question of “biopower,” the general focus of this chapter is to demonstrate, to the contrary, how Foucault’s radical inscription of resistance into the dynamic field of power relations ultimately changes the way in which power and politics can be conceived.

Against reducing the problem of resistance to the question of power, as is often the case in readers of Foucault, the basic theme of this chapter is neither to simply affirm the place of resistance in Foucault’s thought, nor to trace the use of the concept chronologically throughout his work. Instead, the central goal of this chapter is twofold: to demonstrate how Foucault’s analytic of power in *The History of Sexuality* vitally turns upon an alternative critical theory of resistance that acts as the conceptual nexus from which the question of power can be rethought agonistically, and to further explicate how this theory of resistance as such directly corresponds with an alternative principle of intelligibility for an anarchist theory of the political. After addressing the critical reception of Foucauldian resistance from which my own reading intervenes, I first attend to the critical and theoretical context surrounding *The History of Sexuality* in order to

⁶⁷³ Hubert Dreyfus and Paul Rabinow, *Michel Foucault: Beyond Structuralism and Hermeneutics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1983), 127.

demonstrate how the critique of sovereignty that marks the pivotal turning point of Foucault's analytic of power itself turns upon reinvigorating the question of resistance amongst this analytic. Here, I maintain that Foucault's text is itself framed not in terms of rethinking the general problem of power, but as a fundamental way to rethink the question of resistance often neglected in traditional theories of power.

With this in mind, I then trace and explicate Foucault's work regarding the critical question of resistance as initially broached in the fifth thesis on power in *The History of Sexuality*, amongst other key texts and lectures, in order to demonstrate how Foucault's analytic of power ultimately reveals the logic of the primacy of resistance at its base. As I will demonstrate, Foucault's fifth thesis at once has the strategic effect of transforming the traditional notions of power and politics, while further offering a novel reading of the question of resistance. Placing specific emphasis on Foucault's fifth thesis, my intention is to outline certain theses on resistance which might act as a preliminary framework for beginning to transcend the Aristotelian and Schmittian theories of the political, while further tracing how the primacy of resistance allows for a unique connection to be drawn with anarchist political theory. With the rationale of the primacy of resistance acting as the conceptual hinge from which to read the coinciding problematics of power and politics, this chapter ultimately explores how Foucault in turn offers a radically new perspective from which to begin to read the structure and form of the political as a permanent sphere of agonistic struggle between power and resistance. As we will see, by beginning to rethink the general problematic of power through the question of resistance, Foucault discovers a new logic for political theory that can be described as the critical transition from the principle of an *archē* in which the question of politics is reduced to the problematic of governmentality and the logic of the state, to that of an *agōn*, wherein resistance designates the constituent component through which the fields of power and the political emerge.⁶⁷⁴ A critical explanation of the primacy of resistance and its

⁶⁷⁴ In its broadest sense, the term, *agōn*, in Ancient Greek refers to a fundamental struggle or contest between opposing and adversarial forces. Historically, the term has been used as a key reference in relation to the history of athletics, religious festivals, theater, and more recently sociopolitical theory. Foucault began using the term as early as 1970 in the series of lectures titled *Lectures on the Will to Know: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1970-1971*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2013). On Foucault's early use of the term *agōn*, see: (*Lectures on the Will to Know*, 36; 75-76; 91; 101). Throughout these lectures, Foucault often invokes the concept of *agōn* to describe the way in which forms of the

relation to the elaboration of an anarchist hypothesis of the political is therefore the essential task of this chapter.

4.1 Critical Reception of Foucauldian Resistance

Although I am not the first to speak of the problem of resistance in Foucault's thought, the literature regarding the question of resistance is rather minute in comparison to the volumes of work dedicated to the problem of power. For those critical commentators who have engaged with the question of resistance, even the most generous of his critics have never agreed upon the validity of the concept of resistance, nor have they outlined its significance in relation to political theory. As one commentator points out, "any reasonable interpretation of Foucauldian resistance will necessarily have a large amount of indeterminacy."⁶⁷⁵ To be sure, the question of resistance remains one of the more misunderstood, underestimated, and contested concepts in all of Foucault's critical lexicon. Some of the ambiguity derives from the ways in which Foucault appears to dedicate a stronger focus to the concept of "power" within his work, while only occasionally engaging with the problem of resistance as an afterthought to his analytics of power and governmentality. Thus, the most common conviction held by his critics is that "Foucault's conceptualization of resistance is truncated compared to his work on power because he did not study resistance historically in as much detail as power."⁶⁷⁶ In his study of Foucault's place in the history of political theory, Kelly similarly indicates that "if Foucault's remarks on power are schematic, his remarks on resistance are merely suggestive."⁶⁷⁷ To be sure, a large portion of the literature regarding Foucauldian resistance and the subsequent theory that surrounds it have regularly continued to reduce

assertion of truth arises from a struggle between adversaries. "Truth," according to Foucault, is therefore "a phase of the *agōn*, one of the faces of struggle" (75). While to my knowledge Foucault ceases to use the term *agōn* explicitly, instead often preferring the term "agonism" to describe the struggles between forces, it is my contention that Foucault's analytic of power and critical inquiries into the question of politics invoke the notion of an *agōn* as the basis from which to describe how the field of power always coincides with the space of resistance. To be sure, what is crucial about Foucault's intervention into the history of political thought arises in the way that the very questions of power and politics is situated within a domain of an *agōn* instead of an *archē*.

⁶⁷⁵ Brett Pickett, "Foucault and the Politics of Resistance," 461.

⁶⁷⁶ Jon Simons, "Power, Resistance, and Freedom," 310.

⁶⁷⁷ Mark G. Kelly, *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, 105.

the question of resistance in Foucault's work to a theoretical flaw inconsistent with his general analytic of power and governmentality.

While it is true (at least to a certain extent) that Foucault does not undertake a full study of the question of resistance in the same way that he does for power, the general problematic of resistance, however, traverses the core of Foucault's thought. A close reading of Foucault's texts, lectures, and interviews throughout the 1970s and early 1980s reveals a strong engagement with the question of resistance, as well as a rich history regarding the ways in which these forms of resistance are expressed as an art of not being governed. To be sure, as I will argue throughout this chapter, resistance designates the conceptual hinge required for a full understanding of Foucault's analytic of power. In this way, arguments pertaining to the way in which Foucault's theory of power truncates his discussion of resistance, as discussed by critics such as Simons, tend to neglect a critical dimension of Foucault's thought.⁶⁷⁸ In light of these concerns, one of the goals of this chapter is to demonstrate the possibility of a novel reading of the question of resistance in Foucault's thought. Rather than failing to account for its possibility amongst his analytic of power, resistance, I maintain, is itself a necessary component of Foucault's analytics of power and governmentality without which the latter would not be possible.

Although Foucault often emphasizes the significance of the concept and practice of resistance as vital conceptual component to his political and ethical thought, the theory of resistance that lies at the heart of his work is, as to be expected, one of the more criticized and disputed areas of his thought. As feminist and Foucauldian philosopher Johanna Oksala suggests, the concept of "resistance is one of the most contested and divisive" concepts in Foucault's critical thought.⁶⁷⁹ At once controversial and decisive, the concept of resistance, it seems, appears as a theoretical impasse internal to Foucault's analytics of power and governmentality. On the one hand, the concept of "resistance" is often contested on the ground that Foucault's analytic of power is so pervasive that no resistance to relations of power are possible, even conceptually. More generously, the

⁶⁷⁸ See: Jon Simons, "Power, Resistance, and Freedom," 310. While Simons affirms the importance of resistance in Foucault's thought he nevertheless maintains that his work on the question of resistance is overpowered by his discussions of power in comparison.

⁶⁷⁹ Johanna Oksala, "Resistance," 432.

concept of resistance, as Oksala argues, ought to be understood as a central component of Foucault's thought and is therefore decisive insofar as it is the very "key to understanding what power is about."⁶⁸⁰ While Foucault's critics tend to focus on the question of power while disregarding an genuine credit to his theory of resistance, this chapter explores and affirms the idea that Foucault's analytics of power can only be understood on condition of resistance.

Given that much of the literature on Foucault's theory of resistance often repeats (albeit with slight variations) similar shared concerns, the most commonly emphasized areas of concern can be placed into three common criticisms. The first, and most frequently reiterated, criticism directed at the question of Foucauldian resistance argues that, given the analytic of power as developed in both *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault cannot explain (either conceptually or practically) how it is possible to engage in resistance to the very forms of power outlined in his genealogical studies. Taking what Foucault refers to in *The History of the Sexuality* in terms of the "omnipresence of power"⁶⁸¹ as an example of his failure to account for the possibility of resistance, critics such as Habermas⁶⁸² and Thomas McCarthy⁶⁸³ traditionally argue that Foucault's conception of theory of resistance is both theoretically and practically self-refuting. Furthermore, following in the wake of Habermas, more recent critics such as Kevin Anderson,⁶⁸⁴ John Holloway,⁶⁸⁵ and Slavoj Žižek⁶⁸⁶ claim that Foucault's theory of resistance therefore lacks a critical conception of emancipation whereby a subject might be able to escape a certain relation of power, and subsequently maintain that his account of resistance cannot, under pain of contradiction, allow for a critical

⁶⁸⁰ Ibid, 432.

⁶⁸¹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 93.

⁶⁸² See: Jürgen Habermas, "Some Questions Concerning the Theory of Power: Foucault Again," 79-108.

⁶⁸³ Thomas McCarthy, "The Critique of Impure Reason: Foucault and the Frankfurt School," 258.

⁶⁸⁴ Kevin Anderson, "Resistance versus Emancipation: Marcuse, Marx, and the Present Moment," in *Logos: A Journal of Modern Society and Culture*, 12:1 (2013), 1-11.

⁶⁸⁵ John Holloway, *Change the World Without Taking Power* (London: Pluto Press, 2002). For Holloway, Foucault's theory of resistance contains a conceptual impasse in which the concept of "resistance lacks a notion of emancipation," 40. With direct note to Foucault's fifth thesis, Holloway maintains that the "only possibility" of a critical emancipation "is an endlessly shifting constellation of power and resistance," 40.

⁶⁸⁶ See: Slavoj Žižek, *The Ticklish Subject* (London: Verso, 1999), 255. Here Žižek argues that insofar as Foucault's work designates the "absolute inherence of resistance to power" then Foucault appears to "draw the conclusion that resistance is co-opted in advance, that it cannot seriously undermine the system," 255.

conceptualization of freedom. The second traditional area of criticism problematizing the question of resistance in Foucault's thought claims that his theory deceptively lacks a normative framework to describe why resistance is to be preferred over submission. Here, theorists such as Fraser,⁶⁸⁷ Hartstock,⁶⁸⁸ and Pickett⁶⁸⁹ argue that Foucault comes close to positing the absolute necessity of resistance without regard to any normative or ethical basis from which resistance as such might be justified, and furthermore that he cannot provide an answer pertaining to the question of why one might choose to resist in a given circumstance. Finally, despite Foucault's consistent arguments against an underlying essentialism hidden in his analytics of power and resistance, Colin Gordon maintains that Foucault's conception of resistance implicitly relies upon a transcendental substance of being-resistance, or agonal subjectivity that always underlies relations of power.⁶⁹⁰

While these areas often form the general locus from which Foucault's theory of resistance is found to be critically inadequate, the work engaged in outlining a critical analysis of a Foucauldian theory of resistance has nevertheless only scarcely been outlined. There have been, however, a few notably affirmative readings of the concept of resistance in Foucault's thought. Briefly exploring these alternative readings is useful in providing the critical framework for my own affirmation of Foucauldian resistance, while further outlining a theoretical basis from which to overcome the core concerns traditionally invoked to disprove the possibilities afforded by a Foucauldian theory of resistance. Perhaps the first reading that directly engages with and affirms the question of resistance in Foucault's thought can be found in Gilles Deleuze's text *Foucault*

⁶⁸⁷ Nancy Fraser, "Foucault on Modern Power: Empirical Insights and Normative Confusions," in *Unruly Practices: Power, Discourse and Gender in Contemporary Social Theory* (Minnesota: Polity Press, 1989).

⁶⁸⁸ See: N. Hartstock, "Foucault on Power: A Theory for Women?" in *Feminism/Postmodernism*, ed. L. Nicholson (Routledge: New York, 1990), 157-175.

⁶⁸⁹ Pickett, "Foucault and the Politics of Resistance," 445-466. Given that Foucault does not supply an ethical framework for differing forms of resistance Pickett argues that Foucault's theory of resistance is fundamentally faced with a theoretical impasse, or "double-bind," in which Foucault is either forced to "remain trapped in modern power," or forced to "celebrate a resistance without limits," 445.

⁶⁹⁰ Colin Gordon, "Afterword" in Michel Foucault *Power/Knowledge*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 229-259. In Gordon's analysis, inasmuch as "the facts of resistance are nevertheless assigned an irreducible role within the analysis," Foucault's theory seems to implicitly imply a "resistant material," or essential substance hidden beneath power and that makes resistance to power possible (255).

originally published just a few short years after his friend and colleague's death in 1984. Organized around the guiding theme of Foucault's philosophy—that is, of “thinking otherwise”⁶⁹¹—the strength of Deleuze's text arises in the way that he highlights how each of the three major themes (knowledge, power and subjectivation) in Foucault's work all appear to turn upon the question of resistance. In Deleuze's reading, particularly the second section of his study, the notion of resistance is found to be a central component of Foucault's triadic problematization of knowledge, power and subjectivation, and is one of the more continuously cited concepts developed throughout the text.⁶⁹² It should come as no surprise, then, that Deleuze reads Foucault's work as extended critical commentary regarding the practical and conceptual problem of resistance in the history of political theory. For Deleuze, a critical reading of Foucault's collected works appears to turn on the following set of critical questions:

[w]hat is our light and what is our language, that is to say, our ‘truth’ today?
 What powers must we confront, and what is our capacity for resistance, today
 when we can no longer be content to say that the old struggles are no longer worth
 anything? And do we not perhaps above all bear witness to and even participate
 in the ‘production of a new subjectivity’? Do not the changes in capitalism find
 an unexpected ‘encounter’ in the slow emergence of the Self (sic) as a center of
 resistance?⁶⁹³

In a manner that invokes the core logic of Foucault's fifth thesis on power, Deleuze views Foucault's work as being critically centered upon the dual question that at once asks

⁶⁹¹ See: Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, trans. Seán Hand (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1988), 47-124.

⁶⁹² Although he is not generally cited as such, Deleuze's text ought to be understood as making an early contribution to the general theme of resistance in Foucault's thought. In the second part of the text, Deleuze dedicates a significant amount of space to drawing explicit connections between several different concepts in Foucault's thought and the theme of resistance. Indeed, for Deleuze it is on the basis of the possibility of resistance that one must begin to understand Foucault's thought. In this way, Deleuze maintains that in Foucault's thought “there is no diagram that does not also include...points of creativity, change and resistance, and it is perhaps with these that we ought to begin in order to understand the whole picture” (44). With this point in mind, Deleuze thus reads certain major themes in Foucault's thought as simultaneously problems of resistance. On the problem of power and resistance see: 71, 73, 82; on the body and resistance see: 82; on the “thought of the outside” and resistance see: 89, 117, 122; on the primacy of resistance see: 89, 90, 94; on the role of the intellectual and resistance see: 91; on biopower and resistance see: 92, 94; on truth and resistance see: 95; on subjectivation and resistance see: 103, 105, 115.

⁶⁹³ *Ibid*, 115.

“[w]hat powers must we confront, and what is our capacity for resistance?”⁶⁹⁴ Indeed, Deleuze’s text is notable in that it offers one of the first preliminary statements that begins to reveal the logic of the primacy of resistance. Attested to by its permanence within the field of force relations to which power refers, Deleuze maintains that the following conclusion can be drawn from Foucault’s analytic of power: in its irreducibility to the field of power, “the final word on power is that *resistance comes first*” (original emphasis).⁶⁹⁵ Indeed, it is in Deleuze that the logic of the primacy of resistance is first understood as a key focal point in Foucault’s thought, and the intention of this chapter to further explore this gesture toward the primacy of resistance.

As a corollary to the above, Jon Simons provides a brief outline of the fundamental dependence of power on resistance, ultimately suggesting that “power relations do not exist when the struggle ceases, when there is no resistance to the strategy of government from the actions of others.”⁶⁹⁶ Indeed, Simons highlights what can be referred to as the *agonistic specificity* inherent to Foucault’s analytic of power; relations of power can only be conceptualized as such in relation to the forms of struggle animated in movements of resistance against power. To address this question of how power depends on the permanence of resistance requires invoking the logic of the primacy of resistance as the conceptual nexus key to Foucault’s agonistic conception of power. More recently, in his text *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, Kelly dedicates a rare full chapter to the question and general problematic of resistance, and offers one of the more definitive and comprehensive readings affirming its place in Foucault’s thought.⁶⁹⁷ What is particularly significant about Kelly’s chapter is that it is effectively

⁶⁹⁴ Ibid, 115.

⁶⁹⁵ Ibid, 89.

⁶⁹⁶ Jon Simons, “Power, Resistance, and Freedom,” 309.

⁶⁹⁷ See: Kelly, *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, 105-123. Kelly’s work in this text is significant insofar as it offers one of the more extensive analyses of Foucault’s fifth thesis and its place amongst his overall thought. Indeed, Kelly remarks, that although the concept of resistance is reinvigorated in relation to different areas of emphasis in Foucault’s thought, the fifth thesis as initially proposed in *The History of Sexuality* is the “definitive statement from Foucault about resistance,” and thus one that “he never abandons” (106). While his work is useful in highlighting the importance of resistance to Foucault’s general analytic of power, Kelly’s focus often diverges from Foucault in order to invoke the fifth thesis as making a fundamental claim toward a theory of “vitalism” that is must more akin to Deleuze than Foucault. Thus, Kelly writes that the “power-resistance dyad is a mutation of organic life, which is itself a negentropic moment in the physical history of the universe: as such, the universe itself contains the germ of resistance” (117). In this way, Kelly often neglects the development of the question of resistance in

the first full commentary dedicated to a critical exploration of Foucault's fifth thesis from *The History of Sexuality*. Taking seriously the significance of the question of resistance Posed in *The History of Sexuality*, Kelly maintains that Foucault "never abandons this conception," and thus that it is the "definitive statement from Foucault about resistance."⁶⁹⁸ Kelly's work ought therefore to be understood as offering key insight into the ways in which the fifth thesis on power continued to influence and shape Foucault's thought throughout his work, as well as how the concept of resistance allows us to read Foucault in new ways. Yet, although Kelly recognizes the vital importance of the concept of resistance in Foucault's theory of power, his work, like many before, mistakenly denies that any connection can be made between this theory of resistance and anarchism.⁶⁹⁹

The advent of postanarchist critical theory particularly the work of anarchist and philosopher, Todd May, has significantly revitalized scholarly interest in the possibilities afforded by Foucault's theory of resistance, while formulating a preliminary conceptual nexus from which to situate his work within the broader historical and philosophical canon of anarchism. In his work, *Between Genealogy and Epistemology*, May dedicates a full chapter to the question of resistance that both highlights its significance to Foucault's genealogical project while also demonstrating how the concept of resistance allows one to theorize a radical conception of freedom and emancipation.⁷⁰⁰ For May,

Foucault's thought and radically disconnects it from the political and ethical axes of which were of vital importance for Foucault.

⁶⁹⁸ Ibid, 106.

⁶⁹⁹ Mark Kelly, *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, 113-114; 131. Kelly's denial of a possible connection between Foucault and anarchism is less based on his reading of Foucault than it is on his reductive understanding of anarchism. Anarchism, or "a priori anarchism" in Kelly's conception simply refers to a total "abolition of power," and as such is "thoroughly unachievable" (113). Yet, while Kelly denies that it might be possible to situate Foucault within the history of anarchism, he nevertheless suggests that Foucault himself appears to affirm this connection. According to Kelly, then, "Foucault is not opposed to anarchism...so long as it is an anarchism that is not utopian, but rather strategic, defining by its thoroughgoing criticality" (133).

⁷⁰⁰ Todd May, *Between Genealogy and Epistemology: Psychology, Politics, and Knowledge in the Thought of Michel Foucault*, (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1993). Written before the advent of postanarchism, which May would begin to conceive of the following year, this text is significant in that it is one of the first to dedicate a full study of the problem of resistance in Foucault's thought. Several themes in the chapter of resistance would later inform the basis of postanarchist theory, of which the question of resistance lies at the forefront. In regard to Foucauldian scholarship, however, May's work is significant in that it locates the question of resistance as the core problem informing the methodology of what Foucault refers to via Nietzsche as "genealogy." Furthermore, May offers a particularly keen reading of

“the for-the-sake-of-which of genealogical critique is resistance, a resistance whose contours and possibilities we must understand in order to finally grasp the genealogical project” central to Foucault’s thought.⁷⁰¹ The integrity of May’s work is further found in the way in which he affirms Foucauldian resistance as the key concept required for rethinking the question of politics at the cusp of the problem of sovereignty. “To understand the nature of this resistance,” May emphasizes, “will be to recognize the general of micropolitical intervention available to us in a world no longer governed solely by means of sovereign power.”⁷⁰² Furthermore, May’s text *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*,⁷⁰³ as well as a few corresponding articles⁷⁰⁴ coupled within ongoing research, have usefully invoked Foucault’s analytic of power in order to contribute to a rethinking of the question of resistance posed in anarchist political theory. To be sure, “anarchism” according to May “provides the outline of a framework within which to understand poststructuralist political philosophy.”⁷⁰⁵ Contrastingly, however, May also invokes poststructuralist theory as a critical and theoretical framework from which to supplement what he refers to as the “twin assumptions” or twofold “a priori that haunts anarchist thought.”⁷⁰⁶ Common to May’s analysis, as well as the postanarchist

Foucault that does not gloss over the question of resistance with regard to power, and maintains that power is itself only “half of a two-pole relationship” of which resistance is a necessary component (114). For May one cannot, by pain of contradiction, understand the problem of power in Foucault’s thought without necessarily engaging with the question of resistance. May thus argues that Foucault’s thought turns upon a unique relation between resistance and freedom, and enumerates four theses on resistance that turn upon the notion of freedom (119). These theses are as follows: “freedom is not a matter of liberation” (119); “Freedom is not a matter of “universal necessities of human existence, but of concrete struggles for situated values” (120); “freedom is a matter of historical contingency” (120); “there is no necessary endpoint in the struggle for it; resistance may not have a Promised Land” (121). While May refers to these theses as theses on resistance, they are in fact more theses on freedom whereby the concept of resistance is developed only secondarily, or as a precondition for freedom. Nonetheless, May’s work has helped to open the problem of Foucauldian resistance in new ways, and has further aided in elevating the concept of resistance to a status that itself warrants study.

⁷⁰¹ May, *Between Genealogy and Epistemology: Psychology, Politics, and Knowledge in the Thought of Michel Foucault*, 114.

⁷⁰² Ibid, 114.

⁷⁰³ Todd May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, (Pennsylvania: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1994).

⁷⁰⁴ See: Todd May, “Anarchism from Foucault to Rancière,” in *Contemporary Anarchist Studies: An Introductory Anthology to Anarchy in the Academy*, eds. Randall Amster, et al. (New York: Routledge, 2009), 11-17; and Todd May, “Is Post-Structuralist Theory Anarchist?,” in *Post-Anarchism: A Reader*, eds. Duane Rousselle and Süreyya Evren (London: Pluto Press, 2011), 41-45.

⁷⁰⁵ Todd May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, 13.

⁷⁰⁶ Ibid, 65.

project in general, Foucault's analytic of power and resistance is therefore invoked in order to supplement the traditional anarchist "view of power as suppressive" with a productive model of power that corresponds with a new critical conception of political praxis irreducible to what May holds to be the orthodox anarchist a priori search for a "pure, untainted source for resistance."⁷⁰⁷ For May, then, Foucault's analytic of power can be used to supplement the fundamental question of resistance within anarchist theory and practice.

While the postanarchists have made certain significant advances regarding the question of resistance in Foucault's thought, and have further provided key insight into how we might read Foucault as a theorist of resistance, they have nevertheless only gestured toward the logic of the primacy of resistance and its possible connections to anarchism. Indeed, while such work has made significant advances toward the question of resistance within studies of Foucault, a critical exploration of how the fifth thesis fundamentally overturns the basic assumptions of traditional political theory in such a way that the concept of resistance, and not that of an *oikonomia*, come to constitute the paradigm specific to politics has never been written. Furthermore, while May's work has significantly uncovered a unique way to read Foucault's theory of resistance through anarchist political theory, I do not hold as May does that anarchism is haunted by either a repressive view of power, or a transcendental conception of resistance exterior to power. Instead, taking resistance as the key component of anarchist theory as outlined in chapter two, I argue that Foucault's theory of resistance ought not be understood as a supplement to anarchist theory, but rather as the affirmation of an anarchist hypothesis of the political. More specifically, it is my contention in what follows that invoking the logic of resistance, rather than the paradigm of government, reveals for Foucault a critical caesura between the political as *archē* and an anarchic conception of the political as *agōn*.

4.2 The Analytic of Power and the Turn toward the Study of Resistance

Power is not a substance. Neither is it a mysterious property whose origin must be delved into. Power is only a certain type of relation between individuals...The

⁷⁰⁷ Ibid, 65.

*characteristic feature of power is that some men can more or less entirely determine other men's conduct—but never exhaustively or coercively...If an individual can remain free, however little his freedom may be, power can subject him to government. There is no power without potential refusal or revolt.*⁷⁰⁸

--Michel Foucault

Like most political theorists, the question of power is one of the more ubiquitous concepts in all of Foucault's thought, and much of his work is organized as a critical exploration of its general problematic. To be sure, the critical interrogation of the concept of power stretches the trajectory from his early studies to his final works. The question of power is first developed in *The Birth of the Clinic* regarding the problem of the "medical gaze;"⁷⁰⁹ it is developed in *Madness and Civilization* in relation to the birth of the asylum in his study of madness⁷¹⁰—a study that is later resituated in a more political context under heading of "psychiatric power;"⁷¹¹ it is shown, throughout several different times in his work to exist in a position of non-exteriority with different forms of knowledge—hence the term "knowledge-power;"⁷¹² it is a concept that is significantly revamped in *Discipline and Punish* under what he outlines as "disciplinary power;"⁷¹³ it is with the problem of power that Foucault frames his three volumes on the study of the

⁷⁰⁸ Michel Foucault, "Omnes Et Singulatim: Toward a Critique of Political Reason," 324.

⁷⁰⁹ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of the Clinic: An Archaeology of Medical Perception*, trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Vintage, 1994), ix-xi. Although in *The Birth of the Clinic* Foucault lacks the critical language he will later use to describe the interrelation between forms of perception, knowledge and relations of power, the concept of the "medical gaze" as developed in this text ought to be understood as a conceptual predecessor to his later work. Indeed, Foucault also draws explicit connections between the gaze and the development of new forms of "political consciousness" (22-36).

⁷¹⁰ See: Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilization: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*, trans. Richard Howard (New York: Vintage, 1988), 38-64; 65-84; 241-278.

⁷¹¹ Michel Foucault, *Psychiatric Power. Lectures at the Collège de France 1973-1974*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 1-18. In these lectures Foucault revisits several of the earlier general themes found in *The Birth of the Clinic*, *Madness and Civilization*, and *Discipline and Punish* and re-evaluates them amongst his changing analytic of power. As such, these lectures provide a theoretical bridge between Foucault's early work and the new analytic of power that would come to shape his later thought.

⁷¹² See: Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 27. Here, Foucault outlines what he means by "power-knowledge relations," and maintains that "power and knowledge directly imply one another;" thus according to Foucault "there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge" (27).

⁷¹³ See: Foucault, *Discipline and Punish*, 135-169. Here, Foucault traces and outlines the microphysics of "disciplinary power" and differentiates its field and activity from the theory of sovereignty. Although the function and scope of the problem of power is again problematized in his subsequent works, Foucault's work in *Discipline and Punish* prefigures Foucault's theses on power as established in *The History of Sexuality* (26-27).

history of sexuality, and is famously reconceived in the first volume with the neologism “biopower.”⁷¹⁴ Finally, the general problematic of power is shown by Foucault to be a key focus in what he begins to consider as the paradigmatic nexus between “the government of self and the government of others.”⁷¹⁵ It is in this way that Kelly determines that “[i]n a sense, all of Foucault’s work has to do with power.”⁷¹⁶

While Foucault’s redefinition of power remains a pivotal point of departure in much of his work, this same analytic can never to be separated from the critical question of what Foucault refers to throughout several of his works as “resistance.” In this way, Kelly’s claim can be amended in order to suggest that while it is true that all of Foucault’s works involve a critical inquiry into the question of power, this also means that all of his works pertain to the question and study of resistance as well. Thus, while critics tend to read *The History of Sexuality* as Foucault’s most “theoretically sophisticated understanding of...the exercise of power,” it is my contention that the way in which Foucault recasts the study of resistance in this text is even more revolutionary than his analytic of power alone.⁷¹⁷ As we will see, although much of Foucault’s work is centered on the general question of power, the very force of the analytic of power in *The History of Sexuality* derives its specificity from theorizing the primacy of resistance as the vital component that gives the study of power its analytic force. In this way, any inquiry regarding the question of power in Foucault’s thought simultaneously requires a critical investigation into the place and general question of resistance amongst this dynamic. Indeed, it is in Foucault’s analytic of power that the very question of resistance is renewed with particular critical force. At the same time, however, as Foucault radically rethinks the analytic of power through the question of resistance, it is precisely the power/resistance dynamic from which the questions of power and the political can be interpreted anarchically. With this perspective in mind—that a critical inquiry into the question of power is simultaneously posed with the question of resistance for Foucault, and further that this dynamic offers a new perspective on the paradigm of the political consequent upon the permanence of resistance—it is important to outline the theoretical

⁷¹⁴ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 135-159.

⁷¹⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Government of Self and Others*, 4; 42.

⁷¹⁶ Mark Kelly, *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, 31.

⁷¹⁷ Richard A. Lynch, “Reading *The History of Sexuality*, Volume 1,” 154.

context surrounding Foucault's analytic of power in *The History of Sexuality* to demonstrate how a critical theory of resistance forms the nexus upon which the critique of sovereignty and the coinciding analytic of power depends.

Although Foucault previously engaged with the general problematic of power prior to *The History of Sexuality*, it is often recognized that the publication of this text coincides with a radically new analytic and methodological approach to the problem of power situated at the limit of theories of sovereignty.⁷¹⁸ While in *Discipline and Punish* Foucault was already rethinking the basis of power against its locus in the juridical foundation of sovereignty, the general problematic of power is renewed with particular critical force in *The History of Sexuality*. As Foucault reminds his reader, the aim of his project in *The History of Sexuality* is “to move less toward a “theory of power than an ‘analytics’ of power: that is, toward a definition of the specific domain formed by relations of power, and toward a determination of the instruments that will make possible its analysis.”⁷¹⁹ It is in the context of defining the “specific domain” of power and the accompanying analytic that Foucault's project most directly intervenes in the history of political theory. As Arnold Davidson contextualizes, if “Foucault's central contribution to political philosophy” is to be found in the “refinement of a new conception of power,” this is because he puts into “question the two reigning conceptions of power.”⁷²⁰ First, Davidson claims that on one side of the critical spectrum Foucault's analytic of power overturns “the juridical conception found in classical liberal theories,” while on the other Foucault is found to attack “the Marxist conception organized around the notions of the State apparatus, dominant class, mechanisms of conversion, and juridical superstructure.”⁷²¹ Indeed, under what he refers to as the “repressive hypothesis” of power, one of Foucault's central arguments in *The History of Sexuality* is that both theories of sovereignty and Marxist reductionism tend to “mask” the concrete operations of power in such a way that obscures “its own mechanisms.”⁷²²

⁷¹⁸ Ibid, 154.

⁷¹⁹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 82.

⁷²⁰ Arnold Davidson, introduction to *Psychiatric Power: Lectures at the Collège de France, 1973-1974*, trans. Graham Burchell. (New York: Picador, 2006), xiii.

⁷²¹ Ibid, xiii.

⁷²² Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 86. Here Foucault writes that “power is only tolerable on condition that it mask substantial part of itself. Its success is proportional to its abilities to hide its own

It is against, then, this critical background that Foucault's analytic attempts to break free from a "certain image of power-law, of power-sovereignty," or the political theories which assume the "theoretical privilege of law and sovereignty."⁷²³ In Foucault, any analysis "made in terms of power, must not assume that the sovereignty of the state, the form of law... are given at the outset."⁷²⁴ Political theories which locate the source of power "in the primary existence of a central point" only consider what Foucault calls the "terminal forms power takes."⁷²⁵ For Foucault, then, in order to critically "analyze power within the concrete and historical framework of its operation," what is therefore required is the construction "of an analytics of power that no longer takes law as a model and a code."⁷²⁶ In other words, against both traditional and radical political theorists who presuppose the primacy of the state, Foucault reveals an analytic of power and political rationality situated at the horizon of the state.⁷²⁷ Moreover, in the search for a non-sovereign and non-juridical theory of power, Foucault additionally refuses to reduce the study of power to the Marxist conception of its "economic functionality," in which the

mechanisms" (86). Foucault's point here is to demonstrate the ways in which theories of sovereign power and traditional notions of the state have functioned in a way that obscures the actual activity of power. Yet, here we also see that Foucault maintains that the very "success" of the state and sovereign power depends on masking its own activity. While Foucault's central concern in conceptualizing the "repressive hypothesis" of power is directed as a critical attack on theories which reduce the question of power to the logic of the state, his primary goal, however, is to allude to the ways in which a theory of resistance ought not be directed uniformly in relation to the state, but toward the actual sites of power.

⁷²³ Ibid, 90.

⁷²⁴ Ibid, 92.

⁷²⁵ Ibid, 93; 92.

⁷²⁶ Ibid, 90.

⁷²⁷ While Foucault's analytic of power is indeed established as a way to rethink the question of power against the traditional notion of the state, his goal is neither to claim that the state does not exist or come into play within relations of power, but that presupposing the state relies on posing the question of power in terms of juridical, sovereign law. Thus, as Foucault writes in "Truth and Power," posing the problem of power in terms of the "State means to continue posing it in terms of sovereign and sovereignty, that is to say in terms of law" (122). Yet Foucault's point is not to suggest that "the State isn't important," but that relations of power "necessarily extend beyond the limits of the State...first of all because the State, for all the omnipotence of its apparatuses, is far from being able to occupy the whole field of actual power relations, and further because the State can only operate on the basis of other, already existing power relations" (122). In this way, to rethink a critical analytic of power at the horizon of the state, is not to suggest the ultimate disappearance of the state, but that the state cannot in itself account for the concrete operability of power relations. At the same time, Foucault here alludes to a new problem in which radical politics must account for. If the state, as Foucault, claims can only operate as such on condition of "already existing power relations," then perhaps what ought to be at stake in radical theories of liberation is not the overthrow of the state as in traditional anarchist and Marxist theories, but precisely the relations of power that make possible the continuation of the state as such.

role of power acts as a support for the continuation of relations of production and the class relations that sustain them.⁷²⁸ This is why Foucault elaborates his analytic in terms of a “non-economic analysis of power.”⁷²⁹ As Foucault clarifies in an interview from 1978, against the theories which take power as a repressive force maintained in the sovereign center of juridical law, as well as the Marxist reduction of power to the reproduction of relations of productions “power is that which must be explained.”⁷³⁰

With the critical explanation regarding the traditional question of power acting as the basic point of departure for Foucault’s larger project in *The History of Sexuality*, this is why the second chapter of the text is directly dedicated not only as is often cited to outlining the alternative methodological approach to the question of power, but also, and more importantly, to outlining a new analytic of power that can account for the question of resistance amongst its dynamic. Under the heading of the aptly titled chapter “Method” Foucault famously offers five theses on power set to at once rethink the general problem of power at the limit of the logic of the state and the problem of sovereignty, while simultaneously outlining the methodological framework for his ongoing work on power at this time. Indeed, it is with these theses that we can begin to understand the way in which Foucault’s analytic of power corresponds with an alternative theory of the political consequent upon the primacy of resistance. Although Foucault often returns to, with slight variations, the propositions initially set forth in *The History of Sexuality*, all of them nominate five central components required for a preliminary understanding of power relations. Thus, while the concept of “power” remains a fundamental concept for Foucault, and is continuously redeveloped throughout the course of his work, the original theses proposed in 1976 ought to be understood as his definitive outline for a new methodological approach to the study of power. As we will see, although Foucault’s analytic of power is developed as a critique of Marxist reductionism and juridical theories of sovereign law, this same analytic contains a conceptual hinge in which the analytic of power coincides with a critical theory of resistance which, in turn, allows for the question of power to be understood in its agonistic specificity. Contrary to

⁷²⁸ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 14.

⁷²⁹ Ibid, 14.

⁷³⁰ Michel Foucault, “Discourse on Power,” in *Remarks on Marx*, trans. James Goldstein and James Cascaito (New York: Semiotext(e), 1981), 148.

standard readings regarding the question of power in *The History of Sexuality*, it is my contention that Foucault's text must be read as making a fundamental claim regarding not just the possibility of forms of resistance amongst power relations, but also the preliminary elaboration of an alternative theory to account for its appearance within the context of politics. In other words, what is novel in Foucault's account is that this analytic of power can only be conceptualized on condition of the primacy of resistance. What is therefore at stake in Foucault's analytic of power is to articulate the basis of a new political rationality that presupposes the permanent dynamic between power and resistance as the principle of intelligibility of the political.

The five theses composing Foucault's analytic of power in *The History of Sexuality* can be summarized as follows: 1.) Within the dynamic field of force relations, power is attested to and exercised as a non-sovereign, "nonegalitarian" multiplicity of "mobile relations"⁷³¹—that is, power is not a substance that can be acquired or overturned, but is instead what is exercised from a multiplicity of points corresponding with other social relations; 2.) Relations of power exist in a position of non-exteriority with other relations; in their position of non-exteriority, power relations are immanent within other relations such as "economic processes, knowledge relationships, sexual relations," and are therefore productive—that is, mutually reinforcing—rather than prohibitive; 3.) Power does not presuppose an essential duality or binary division between the "rule and the ruled," but instead comes from and is exercised from below; 4.) Power is "intentional" and implies a strategic relation exercised with certain aims and tactics;⁷³² 5.) "Where there is power, there is resistance."⁷³³ In this final thesis, Foucault maintains that points of resistance are primary and absolutely coextensive with relations of power. In other words, the appearance of power necessarily implies the potentiality of resistance, and is therefore attested to by the permanence of this potential revolt. Traditionally readers of Foucault often point to the way in which these theses mark a critical turning point in his collective thought, and there have been numerous texts, articles and collections exploring Foucault's analytic of power. Nevertheless, the

⁷³¹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 95.

⁷³² Ibid, 94.

⁷³³ Ibid, 95.

majority of these studies tend to focus on the first four propositions, while excluding, or discounting the importance of the fifth. Thus, while Kelly maintains that this “reconceptualization of power is generally recognized as one of Foucault’s most important intellectual contributions,” the critical exploration of the Foucauldian analytic of power traditionally tends to over-emphasize the first four propositions at the expense of the question of resistance.⁷³⁴ To be sure, inasmuch as the publication of *The History of Sexuality* is understood to correspond with a significant and vital renewal of the question of power, it is my contention that the fifth thesis attests to a critical renewal of the question of resistance as well.

As found in the above theses, a critical inquiry into the possible redefinition of power need not analyze, according to Foucault, what power is in terms of a sovereign substance, but instead examines the existence of power in terms of its strategic exercise within the domain in which it operates. Analyzing the specific techniques of power within the domain in which they operate constitutes the basic analytic framework for a critical inquiry into the problematic of power for Foucault. In order to account for the quotidian operations of power, this new preliminary analytics of power “must be understood in the first instance,” according to Foucault, “as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization.”⁷³⁵ Here, Foucault importantly redefines power in terms of a relation between forces, whereby the “domain” to which power consists designates the strategic field in which these force relations operate. In this way, Foucault’s analytic of power in *The History of Sexuality* radically dislocates power from its traditional locus within the archaic foundation of sovereignty. Rather than arising from the foundation of sovereignty, “[p]ower relations” as Foucault maintains, “are rooted in the whole network of the social.”⁷³⁶ Indeed, this is the first vital difference Foucault’s analytic notes in regard to the traditional question of power. Instead of locating the source of power with a sovereign entity or the logic of the state, Foucault maintains that the domain in which

⁷³⁴ Kelly, *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, 33.

⁷³⁵ Ibid, 92.

⁷³⁶ Michel Foucault, “Subject and Power,” 345.

power both consists and operates takes the form of a network co-extensive with the social.

Furthermore, what is at stake for Foucault is to redefine the exercise of power in such a way that it cannot be simply reduced to the conception of a “juridico-discursive” exercise of law as the constitutive essence of power.⁷³⁷ As Foucault writes, inasmuch as “one schematizes power in a juridical form,” then “one defines its effects as obedience.”⁷³⁸ Such an analytic is reductive for Foucault, since it presupposes a binary representation of a sovereign “legislative power on one side, and an obedient subject on the other.”⁷³⁹ Distinguishable from relations of “obedience,” the general problem of power for Foucault is neither located within an “institution,” nor an elemental “structure;” instead power is redefined by Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* as “the name that one attributes to a complex strategical situation in a particular society.”⁷⁴⁰ With its emphasis on redefining power as a “complex strategical situation,” Deleuze writes that “Foucault’s definition seems a very simple one: power is a relation between forces, or rather every relation between forces is a power relation.”⁷⁴¹ As Foucault further insists in “The Subject and Power,” inasmuch as power is understood as a multiplicity of force relations spread throughout the network of the social, the “exercise of power is not simply a relationship between ‘partners,’ individual or collective; it is a way in which some act on others”—that is power is redefined by Foucault as a “set of actions upon actions,” or “conduct of conducts.”⁷⁴² Thus, as an action of conduction, in 1979 Foucault further clarifies that “power is only a certain type of relation between individuals.”⁷⁴³ The redefinition of power as a relation between forces, or “conduct of conducts”—that is as the “complex strategical situation” in which power operates—has immense consequences for political theory and forms, as Foucault writes in *The History*

⁷³⁷ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 82.

⁷³⁸ Ibid, 85.

⁷³⁹ Ibid, 85.

⁷⁴⁰ Ibid, 93.

⁷⁴¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, 70.

⁷⁴² Michel Foucault, “Subject and Power,” 340-341.

⁷⁴³ Michel Foucault, “Omnes Et Singulatim: Toward a Critique of Political Reason,” 324.

of *Sexuality*, the basic possibility to “escape from the system of the Law-and-Sovereign which has captivated political thought for such a long time.”⁷⁴⁴

While the first four theses on power are set to dislocate the general schematic of power from its sovereign, archic center by redefining power in terms of the force relations immanent within the domain in which the operate, this analytic requires further attention given to the fifth thesis in order to fully comprehend the possibility and stakes of a non-sovereign conception of power. Although Foucault’s analytic of power is established as a fundamental critique of sovereignty, what is at stake in the fifth thesis is that this study of power turns upon and reveals a fundamental logic of struggle—indeed of permanent conflict—inherent within, and constituent of, power relation as such. If power, as opposed to “obedience” can be redefined as a relation between forces, then what Foucault’s fifth attempts to account for is the very possibility of revolt amongst this relation. Indeed, throughout his work, Foucault invokes and utilizes the term, “resistance,” to denote the vital manner in which power relations cannot never be fully stabilized into relations of obedience, but instead assume the form of an agonistic struggle between forces. To be sure, this is why specific importance should be attached to the question of resistance in Foucault. While the analytic of power from *The History of Sexuality* is situated within the context of a critique of sovereignty, it is my contention that Foucault’s fifth thesis highlights a critical caesura between the rationale of an archē which has always ground the question of politics within the paradigms of sovereignty or government and the logic of agonism, in which the concept of struggle not only designates the sphere in which relations of power operate but, more fundamentally, the nexus between the exercise of power and the permanent potentiality of resistance. In this way, with reference to the fifth thesis what is at stake for Foucault is to account for a political rationality that describes the logic of power in terms of permanent, “ceaseless struggles and confrontations” between techniques of power and strategies of resistance.⁷⁴⁵ Rethinking the question of power in its irreducibility to the logic of sovereignty and economic reductionism, Foucault’s point of departure from both orthodox political philosophy and Marxist thought is therefore to demonstrate the ways in which these

⁷⁴⁴ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 97.

⁷⁴⁵ Ibid, 92.

previous theories of power cannot adequately “account for the intrinsic intelligibility of conflicts” that is made possible by, and lies at the heart of, power relations.⁷⁴⁶ In other words, what the problem of power reveals for Foucault is a logic of historical struggle in which the concept of resistance is radically inscribed into the field of power relations reconceived as *agōn*.

Thus, while Foucault’s work is to be distinguished from the rationale of sovereignty and Marxist theories in terms of his analytic of power, this same analytic also attempts to emphasize and rethink the place and subsequent theory of struggle—indeed, of resistance—amongst the dynamic to which power refers. In this way, insofar as power is taken to refer to a strategic relation of forces “one has a much better chance,” Foucault argues, “than in other theoretical procedures of grasping the relation that exists between power and struggles.”⁷⁴⁷ What is therefore at stake in Foucault’s analytic is not simply an alternative grid from which power might be conceptualized, but a theory that pinpoints and renders discernable the conflict between power and what he continuously refers to throughout his work as “resistance.” It is precisely this conflict between power and resistance that Foucault maintains is traditionally overlooked in previous theories, including revolutionary traditions such as Marxism. As Foucault clarifies in an interview, “[w]hat I find striking in the majority—if not of Marx’s texts then those of the Marxists...is the way in they pass over in silence what is understood by *struggle* when one talks of class struggle” (original emphasis).⁷⁴⁸ If as Foucault claims that “neither the dialectic, as a logic of contradictions, nor semiotics, as the structure of communication, can account for the intrinsic intelligibility of conflicts” then his analytic of power and resistance ought to read as a critique of the notion of “class struggle.”⁷⁴⁹ Indeed, the text

⁷⁴⁶ Michel Foucault, “Truth and Power,” 114.

⁷⁴⁷ Michel Foucault, “The Confession of the Flesh,” in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings: 1972-1977*, eds. Colin Gordon, Leo Marshall, John Mepham, and Kate Soper (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 208.

⁷⁴⁸ *Ibid*, 208.

⁷⁴⁹ Michel Foucault, “Truth and Power,” 114. As Foucault comments here, his theory is to be clearly distinguished from the logic of the dialectic that was still predominant amongst scholars and practitioners of revolutionary ideologies from the late 18th century to his own time. Similar to the claim that the state and sovereign power tend to mask the actual existence of power relations, Foucault argues that the dialectic tends to evade or obscure actually existing forms of struggle by attempting to reduce all struggles to a single logic. For Foucault, then, the “[d]ialectic is a way of evading the always open and hazardous reality of conflict by reducing to a Hegelian skeleton” (115).

itself should be understood as an attempt to account for a non-dialectic logic of conflict within relations of power, as well as the principle of intelligibility from which the concepts of struggle and conflict can be highlighted as the constitutive component specific to power. It is within the context of an agonistic theory of power, that Foucault's theses can be fully understood, and by which the question of resistance becomes more acute.

Although it is widely recognized that Foucault's strategic model of power relations and the corresponding theory of resistance is one of the key objectives in *The History of Sexuality*, the full stakes of this analytic have yet to be realized. While one of Foucault's primary objectives is indeed to trace the "regime of power-knowledge-pleasure that sustains the discourse on human sexuality in our world," much of the critical literature on this text neglects to notice that Foucault's focus is not simply to outline the way in which sexuality is co-extensive with relations of power/knowledge, but instead to complicate and rethink the possibility of a critical emancipation from this very nexus.⁷⁵⁰ As Foucault maintains in 1979, part of his project was to describe a new rationale of power in order to contribute to a rethinking of the possibility of a critical theory of resistance to the forms of power outlined throughout several of his works. "Consequently," Foucault insists,

those who resist or rebel against a form of power cannot merely be content to denounce violence or criticize an institution...What has to be questioned is the form of rationality at stake...Its inevitable effects are both individualization and totalization. Liberation can only come from attacking not just one of these two effects but political rationality's very roots.⁷⁵¹

To be sure, it is within this context of "attacking" the specific political rationality of power, as well as a corresponding politics of resistance that Foucault's analytic of power most forcibly intervenes in the history of political theory.

It is in this regard that *The History of Sexuality* ought to be read as developing an extended critical commentary regarding an alternative way to understand the place of resistance amongst this changing analytic of power. Indeed, Foucault's text is itself

⁷⁵⁰ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 11.

⁷⁵¹ Michel Foucault, "Omnes Et Singulatim: Toward a Critique of Political Reason," 324-325.

framed by the very question of resistance, and one of the principle objectives of the text is to offer an analysis of the ways in which this alternative analytic of power more fundamentally corresponds with a theory of resistance. From the opening section to the final sentence of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault frames his argument both within the larger context of previous theories of liberation, as well as a corresponding theory of resistance consequent upon his new analytic of power. In the opening section of the text Foucault extensively questions theories of liberation that assume a “repressive hypothesis” of power, and argues that what “sustains our eagerness to speak of sex in terms of repression is doubtless this opportunity to speak out against the powers that be, to utter truths and promise bliss, to link together enlightenment, liberation and manifold pleasures.”⁷⁵² Presupposing the “repressive hypothesis” of power, the accompanying theory of liberation can only be accounted for, according to Foucault, in a simple gesture that binds liberation to the same logic of power it attempts to overcome. Thus, in the final pages of the work, after posing the possibility of a “different economy of bodies and pleasures” that might one day sever its nexus the forms of power sustaining this economy of bodies through the deployment of sexuality, Foucault closes the text with the following critique: “[t]he irony of this deployment is in having us believe that our “liberation” is in the balance.”⁷⁵³

It is because Foucault frames his text in terms of the question of possible emancipation, that a specific subtext referring to and regarding the question of resistance can be revealed as one of the central goals of this work. Yet, while Foucault’s text is framed in the context of emancipatory theories of liberation, he nevertheless clarifies that the term, liberation is itself inadequate to account for the logic of struggle inherent amongst power relations. “I have always been somewhat suspicious of the notion of liberation,” Foucault maintains, “because if it is not treated with precautions...one runs the risk of falling back on the idea that there exists a human nature or base...concealed, alienated, or imprisoned in and by mechanisms of repression.”⁷⁵⁴ For Foucault, then,

⁷⁵² Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 7.

⁷⁵³ Ibid, 159.

⁷⁵⁴ Michel Foucault, “The Ethics of the Concern for Self as an Exercise of Freedom,” 282. What is at stake, for Foucault is not simply to renounce or deny the possibility of actually existing liberation movements, but to begin to describe a new logic that can account for and render discernible other forms of struggles that might not qualify as traditional movements of liberation. As Foucault clarifies, “I am not trying to say

“the practice of liberation is not in itself sufficient to define the practices of freedom” required in a theory of resistance.⁷⁵⁵ Yet, Foucault is also suspicious of the term *revolution* in a similar manner. For Foucault, one of the problems with the concept of “revolution” is that it constitutes a “gigantic effort to domesticate revolts within a rational and controllable history.”⁷⁵⁶ With this critical framework in mind, the subtext that runs parallel to and stretches the entire trajectory of *The History of Sexuality*, is set to pose the critical question pertaining to the ways in which one might rethink the possibility of a critical emancipation from relations of power neither in terms of “liberation,” nor “revolution,” but as the permanent possibility of resistance amongst the dynamic field of power.

It is in this way that we might read Foucault’s analytic of power as making a key contribution not simply to political theory in terms of an alternative analytic of power, but to radical political theory as well in terms of rethinking through the possibility of a critical theory of resistance to power. By analyzing the question of emancipation in terms of resistance instead of the traditional Marxist theories of contradiction and dialectical class struggle, Foucault attempts to provide an alternative way to understand the concept of struggle without reducing it to either “class struggle,” or “revolution.” As Foucault writes elsewhere, his own question of resistance ought to be distinguished from the ways in which “in order to think struggle, the ‘revolutionary’ thought of the nineteenth century adopted *the logical form of contradiction*” (original emphasis).⁷⁵⁷ It is in the context of 19th and 20th century revolutionary thought—both Marxist (and some anarchist thought to a lesser extent)—that Foucault asks “[a]re there no great radical ruptures, massive binary divisions, then?”⁷⁵⁸ While Foucault acknowledges the historicity of revolution, he nevertheless concludes that his focus is to be directed towards

that liberation as such, or that form of liberation, does not exist: when a colonized people attempts to liberate itself from its colonizers, this is indeed a practice of liberation in the strict sense” (282). Faced with the inadequacies of the concept of liberation, this is why Foucault prefers the concept of resistance in order to account for other forms of struggles aside from traditional liberation movements.

⁷⁵⁵ Ibid, 282.

⁷⁵⁶ Michel Foucault, “Useless to Revolt?” 450.

⁷⁵⁷ Michel Foucault, “Power and Strategies,” in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings 1972-1977*, ed. Colin Gordon (New York: Pantheon Books, 1980), 144.

⁷⁵⁸ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 96.

that “transitory points of resistance, producing cleavages in society that shift about.”⁷⁵⁹ In other words, while Foucault’s fifth thesis is not set to deny the possibility of revolution, his thought does however point toward the ways in which the concept of resistance, and not the traditional notions of revolution or class struggle, might constitute the locus from which to rethink the project of radical politics. Yet, although Foucault emphasizes that the project of radical politics ought to rethink its connection to the domain of the political and its consequent forms of political struggle in terms of resistance rather than revolution, this thesis is not set to radically deny the possibility of a total revolution. Instead, in the passage immediately following his fifth thesis on power Foucault writes that “it is doubtless the strategic codification of the points of resistance that makes a revolution possible.”⁷⁶⁰ Nevertheless, while Foucault acknowledges that varying points of resistance might be coordinated to form a revolution, it is precisely in regard to this codification of revolt that he suggests begins to connect revolutionary theory to the logic of the state. Indeed, inasmuch as points of resistance can be coordinated into a revolution, the revolutionary process, Foucault laments, is “somewhat similar to the way in which the state relies on the institutional integration of power relations.”⁷⁶¹

While Foucault’s critique of revolutionary logic and its similarities to the logic of the state will be dealt with more extensively in chapter 6, what is key for Foucault is that what traditional forms of radical politics tend to ignore in favor of revolutionary theory, are the “transitory points of resistance” effectively producing ruptures and substantial changes within the field of power. This is to say that what is at stake for Foucault is that revolutionary theory cannot in itself account for the wide variety of forms of struggle dispersed amongst the dynamic field of power relations. Indeed, rather than attempting to understand the question of struggle and conflict in terms of revolution, Foucault suggests both that the question of historical struggle can be more clearly understood in terms of a politics of resistance rather than revolution. In other words, while Foucault does not deny the possibility of a revolutionary politics he does point toward the way in

⁷⁵⁹ Ibid, 96.

⁷⁶⁰ Ibid, 96.

⁷⁶¹ Ibid, 96.

which resistance, more often than revolution, is what produces radical ruptures and transformations within society.

It is within the context of significantly renewing a critical theory of historical struggle that Foucault's critical inquiry into the question of power in *The History of Sexuality* must be read as revitalizing the question of resistance with particular force. To be sure, the subtext running the length of the text is set to demonstrate that when power is no longer conceived in its traditional sovereign form, then any theory of liberation from, or resistance to, power is found to require a corresponding reevaluation. Indeed, it is the very possibility of a theory of resistance that forms the basis of what Foucault refers to as the "historico-political question" against the "repressive hypothesis."⁷⁶² In other words, the stakes of the "repressive hypothesis" Foucault uses as a critical foil for his inquiry into the problematic of power, is ultimately theorized in order to rethink the question of resistance against the traditional totalizing logic of revolutionary theory. For Foucault, then, the critical question that needs to be posed in relation to this analytic of power is directly situated within the context of resistance:

Did the critical discourse [read revolutionary theory] that addresses itself to repression come to act as a roadblock to a power mechanism that had operated unchallenged up to that point, or is it not in fact part of the same historical network as the thing it denounces (and doubtless misrepresents) by calling it repression?⁷⁶³

Here, Foucault poses two interrelated problems pertaining to the question of resistance in regard to the "repressive hypothesis" of power. First, Foucault questions the possibility and efficacy of a theory of liberation posed under the assumption of power acting in accordance with the exercise of legal prohibition. When power is taken as that which represses, this gives rise to the idea that liberation can only be obtained through a struggle with the external forces of oppression. Liberation from power as such remains caught within the representation of power it attempts to escape in as much as it does not take into account or criticize the archaic principle that conforms power to the form of law. Indeed, if as Foucault maintains that in its non-sovereign form, power is not exercised solely in

⁷⁶² Ibid, 10.

⁷⁶³ Ibid, 10.

terms of legal rights, then resistance to power cannot invoke the same logic of legal rights as a platform for transformation. Without taking into account the very principle that reduces relations of power to its juridical foundation, previous theories of liberation, according to Foucault, have historically failed to form an adequate “roadblock” to power itself.

Foucault’s second point of criticism is, however, even more insidious and is set to strike at the heart of the most radical theories of liberation throughout the 19th and 20th centuries. On the one hand, Foucault has in mind the problem of revolutionary vanguardism, in which a revolution can only be achieved by conquering or overthrowing state power. Revolutionary vanguardism and the classical Marxist project therefore remain bound, according to Foucault, to the “same historical network as the thing it denounces.” A revolutionary project that presupposes the repressive hypothesis of power tends to view power as a substance that can be captured and manipulated in accordance with the process of revolution. In other words, if power is understood in terms of a central source such as the state, then as May observes it is possible for some to form a vanguard or party from which to “lead the resistance against the power relationships of that site.”⁷⁶⁴ Yet, as May further observes, if Foucault understands power as a creative and not solely oppressive force, then relations of power give “rise not only to that which must be resisted,” but also to the “forms resistance itself often takes.”⁷⁶⁵ For May, insofar as “power creates its own resistance,” then one of Foucault’s central claims is that the “liberation from specific forms of power must take account of the kind of resistance that is being engaged in, on pain of repeating that which one is trying to escape.”⁷⁶⁶ As May points toward, here, Foucault wants to rethink the problem of resistance in such a way that the very possibility of “liberation” cannot ultimately turn upon the eternal return of the logic of the state. Consequently, what Foucault ultimately reveals with equal and particular significance is a fundamental reevaluation not only of the question and theory of resistance, but its very possibility amongst a dynamic of forces. In this way, while Foucault’s analytic of power is to be clearly distinguished from both Marxist and liberal

⁷⁶⁴ Todd May, *The Political Philosophy of Poststructuralist Anarchism*, 11.

⁷⁶⁵ *Ibid*, 73.

⁷⁶⁶ *Ibid*, 73.

theories, this same analytic contributes to an alternative theory of resistance clearly distinguishable from previous revolutionary theories of liberation. As we will see, against traditional conceptions of power Foucault's analytic of power takes as its key component, the question of resistance, while further renewing its significance in a radically different manner than previous theories and discourses of revolution.

If the question of resistance is glossed over by the study of power, this is often due to, as May suggests, a critical failure to acknowledge that power as found in the fifth thesis "is only one half of a two pole relationship, power/resistance, in which force is always pitted against force."⁷⁶⁷ To be sure, insofar as the possibility of resistance amongst relations of power is what Foucault maintains allows for power to be distinguished from relations of obedience and domination, then the fifth thesis appears as the conceptual hinge upon which the analytic of power fundamentally depends. For Kelly, then, "Foucault's reconception of power," simultaneously coincides with and "requires a reexamination of resistance."⁷⁶⁸ In other words, insofar as Foucault uncovers a new analytic of power in *The History of Sexuality*, the very study of power renders the problem of resistance more acute. A closer investigation of this two-pole relationship between power and resistance and the subsequent challenges this poses to both traditional political theory as well as theories of liberation is therefore required. It is my contention that Foucault's fifth thesis on power ought to attain a valorized position in regard to the other theses insofar as it is found to be required for the possibility of relations of power. Furthermore, Foucault's fifth thesis is his most decisive statement regarding the problem of resistance and one that he never abandons, continuously modifying throughout the final periods of his work. Foucault's thesis regarding the primacy of resistance therefore reveals the limit of traditional theories of the political, and uncovers a new way to read the problem of politics in such a way that transcends the paradigms of Aristotle and Schmitt. This unique relation between power and resistance has the effect of revising the traditional conceptions of both power and resistance, and thus offers key insight into formulating the basic tenets of an anarchist hypothesis of the political.

⁷⁶⁷ Todd May, *Between Genealogy and Epistemology*, 114.

⁷⁶⁸ Mark Kelly, *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, 106.

4.3 On the Primacy of Resistance

*Where there is power, there is resistance...these points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network.*⁷⁶⁹

--Michel Foucault

In the above discussion regarding the critical context surrounding the analytic of power in *The History of Sexuality*, we have seen how Foucault frames the general argument not simply in terms of a non-sovereign theory of power, but in terms of retheorizing the possibility of a theory of resistance amongst this dynamic. Instead of bracketing the concept of resistance to the study of power, we must now turn to a more detailed critical examination of Foucault's fifth thesis in order to reveal the way in which it posits the logic of the primacy of resistance. Of the five theses outlined in the second chapter of *The History of Sexuality* the final is the most copious, and Foucault dedicates a significant amount of space to exploring the general question of resistance, as well as its consequent implications. If Foucault's fifth thesis requires more space than the previous four, this is because it has the effect of rethinking the traditional concepts of both power and resistance in such a way that challenges the basic political rationality that lies at the heart of Western political theory. Although the concept of power is commonly given a valorized status in political thought, Foucault's work suggests an uncommon, opposing viewpoint that asserts a uniquely co-extensive dynamic relation between power and resistance. A critical recognition of the primacy of resistance within the dynamic to which power refers and consists, allows for a new perception of the political and clarifies its possibility as the basis for an anarchist hypothesis of the political.

Given the way in which this thesis and the subsequent passage that follows designate Foucault's most definitive statement regarding a critical inquiry into the question of resistance, as well as the amount of time Foucault spends here on exploring several subsequent consequences in regard to the general problematic of resistance, a full citation of this key passage is required in order to understand the full scope and complexities of the argument. In what appears as a one of the more essential, critical

⁷⁶⁹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 95.

commentaries within the history of political philosophy, Foucault's fifth thesis on power reads as follows:

Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power. Should it be said that one is always "inside" power, there is no "escaping" it, there is no absolute outside where it is concerned, because one is subject to the law in any case? This would be to misunderstand the strictly relational character of power relationships. Their existence depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance: these play the role of adversary, target, support, or handle in power relations. These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network. Hence there is no single locus of great Refusal (sic), no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary. Instead there are a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case: resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent; still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial; by definition, they can only exist in the strategic field of power relations. But this does not mean that they are only a reaction or rebound, forming with respect to the basic domination an underside that is in the end always passive, doomed to perpetual defeat. Resistances do not derive from a few heterogeneous principles; but neither are they the lure or a promise that is necessarily betrayed. They are the odd term in relations of power; they are inscribed in the latter as an irreducible opposite. Hence they too are distributed in irregular fashion: the points, knots, or focuses of resistance are spread over time and space at varying densities, at times mobilizing groups or individuals in a definitive way, inflaming certain points of the body, certain moments in life, certain types of behavior. Are there no great radical ruptures, massive binary divisions, then? Occasionally, yes. But more often one is dealing with mobile and transitory points of resistance, producing cleavages in society that shift about, fracturing unities and effecting regroupings, furrowing across individuals themselves, cutting them up and remolding them, marking off irreducible regions in them, in their bodies and minds. Just as the network of power relations ends by forming a dense web that passes through

apparatuses and institutions, without being exactly localized in them, so too the swarm points of resistance traverses social stratifications and individual unities. And it is doubtless the strategic codification of these points of resistance that make a revolution possible, somewhat similar to the way in which the state relies upon the institutional integration of power relationships.⁷⁷⁰

As attested to in density and length there are many significant claims, factors, and consequences Foucault wants to point his audience toward that might act as a preliminary outline for an analytic of power that can account for the place of resistance amongst its dynamic. It is my contention that this thesis and the subsequent passage ought to read as making a vital statement and critique not only of the traditional paradigms of political theory, but also on the condition of radical political theory. The central claim here, of which the rest of this passage explores in greater depth, is “[w]here there is power, there is resistance,” and consequently that this resistance is therefore “never in a position of exteriority in relation to power.” While the first part of this thesis posits that resistance is primary with power, the latter affirms that this position of primacy is itself attested to by a principle of non-exteriority in relation to the dynamic field of power. Taken together, these two components form the general logic of what I refer to as the primacy of resistance, a specific rationale in which the question of politics can be understood in its anarchic and agonistic specificity.

In its most preliminary form, Foucault’s fifth thesis has the effect of strategically reworking the traditional concepts of both power and resistance in such a way that the field of the political can neither be reduced to the paradigms of government and sovereignty outlined in chapter one. In regard to the question of power, the fact that resistance is primary with power radically disrupts the theory regarding the sovereignty of power as an absolute unto itself, and thus reveals an alternative paradigm opposed to the theories based in the political thought of Hobbes and Schmitt. It is in this way that the fifth thesis can first be understood as making a vital statement on the radical dislocation of the place of power from its position of sovereignty in regard to the logic of the state—that is, the fact that resistance is primary amongst power relations radically modifies the way in which power has traditionally been conceptualized according to

⁷⁷⁰ Ibid, 95.

Foucault. Without the logic of an archē acting as the basis from which a critical theory of power can be conceptualized, Foucault's thesis first demonstrates that relations of power are made possible and can only be understood on condition of resistance. What is therefore first at stake within this dynamic is that resistance is situated in a position of primacy with respect to power—that is, “[w]here there is power, there is resistance” means that the domain to which power consists radically coincides with the permanence of resistance. Rather than presupposing the sovereignty of the state as the archic foundation of power, Foucault's thesis demonstrates that the site of power is both theoretically and materially coupled with the site of resistance. Resistance is therefore primary with power, according to Foucault, since it designates a permanent component and condition of possibility for relations of power as such. In its position of primacy, however, resistance is a permanent feature of relations of power, and yet is never exterior to this dynamic. Foucault's thesis thus asserts a principle of non-exteriority with regard to resistance.

Although the two parts composing this thesis are directly interrelated, each needs to be investigated on its own terms in order to fully understand the complexities regarding how the primacy of resistance forms the nexus from which the analytic of power and the domain of the political can be fundamentally rethought. In this way, Foucault's fifth thesis has the effect of fundamentally challenging the traditional conceptions of power and resistance, while corresponding with a new framework for political theory from which to rethink the problem of politics as a coinciding field of struggle between the two. In order to rethink the very question of politics against the paradigm of government and the sovereign logic of the state, it is therefore crucial to understand the ways in which power as posed by Foucault in *The History of Sexuality* ought to be understood on condition of resistance. Foucault's thesis “[w]here there is power, there is resistance,” is not an isolated claim, and different variations with slight altercations appear at several different points throughout his thought and work. It is by demonstrating the ways in which Foucault's fifth thesis modifies traditional conceptions of power via resistance, that the logic of the primacy of resistance forms the pivotal point from which an anarchist hypothesis of the political can be found.

Rather than presupposing the problematic of sovereignty as the foundational source of power, Foucault's fifth thesis maintains that the very possibility of power implies that resistance is topologically coextensive within the dynamic field to which power functions and arises: hence "[w]here there is power, *there* is resistance" (my emphasis). In this way, Foucault conceives of the dynamic between power and resistance spatially—that is, the dynamic field to which power refers does not emerge with the problem of sovereignty, but is instead coupled with and necessarily includes the plane of resistance as a constituent element of power as such; the site of power for Foucault is simultaneously the site of resistance. Indeed, this is the first way in which Foucault begins to reveal the vital manner in which resistance is to be situated in a fundamental position of primacy amongst the dynamic to which power refers. Insofar as Foucault understands power as a network, coextensive with the social body, this means that the place for resistance is found to take on a similar structure, and is therefore simultaneously spread throughout this same dynamic. This is why in the passage immediately following the fifth thesis Foucault writes: "[j]ust as the network of power relations ends by forming a dense web that passes through apparatuses and institutions, without being exactly localized within them, so too the swarm points of resistance traverses social stratifications and individual unities."⁷⁷¹ Rather than failing to account for the possibility of resistance, Foucault instead reminds us that "these points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network."⁷⁷² Inasmuch as points of resistances are "present everywhere" within the dynamic field to which power refers, then the very "domain" of power coincides with and cannot be separated from the field of resistance. Consequent upon the permanent presence of "swarm points of resistance" amongst relations of power, this, then, is the first central claim set to rethink the problem of power parallel with the question of resistance as posed in Foucault's fifth thesis. *The power/resistance dynamic is attested to by a spatial topology; the historical presence of power directly corresponds with and reveals the appearance of counter-historical movements of resistance. The field of power is coextensive with, and can never be divorced from, the "swarm points of resistance."*

⁷⁷¹ Ibid, 96.

⁷⁷² Ibid, 95.

While Foucault asserts the primacy of resistance in terms of a spatial topology, his thesis also points toward the ways in which resistance designates the condition of possibility required for the emergence of power as such. Although the advent of politics in the tradition from Hobbes to Schmitt can be conceived on condition of the eradication of resistance, Foucault radically inverts this idea and demonstrates that the manifestation of power relations can only be conceived on condition of resistance. This is why in certain key moments in his work, Foucault's reiterates this idea in order to capture this crucial distinction. Thus, in 1982 Foucault maintains that "if there was no resistance, there would be no power relations. Because it would simply be a matter of obedience,"⁷⁷³ while elsewhere he maintains quite firmly that "there are no relations of power without resistances."⁷⁷⁴ In these modifications of the fifth thesis, the concept of resistance is neither taken as a supplement to nor considered secondary in relation to power, but that which is profoundly required in terms of its condition of possibility; resistance is what prevents relations of power from solidifying into states of domination. Foucault's claim that resistance is primary with respect to power thus demonstrates both the permanent dependence of power on resistance, as well as its permanence amongst the dynamic to which power refers. It is in this way that Foucault's fifth thesis can be understood as formulating the conceptual hinge required for both the theory and appearance of power. *Distinct from relations of obedience and domination, the condition of possibility of power is the permanence of resistance amongst the dynamic to which it refers and operates, without which the former could not come into being; power as such can only be understood on condition of the permanence of resistance.*

While Foucault's thesis inscribes resistance into power relations as both its condition of possibility and constituent component, the same proposition additionally points toward another way that we might understand the primacy of resistance. As resistance marks out a terrain that cannot be separated from the possibility of relations of power, the claim "[w]here there is resistance, there is power" is further set to elaborate the question of resistance in terms of a radical *potentiality of revolt*. Thus, in a lecture where Foucault critiques the forms of political rationality sustaining Western political

⁷⁷³ Michel Foucault, "Sex, Power, and the Politics of Identity," 167.

⁷⁷⁴ Michel Foucault, "Power and Strategies," 142.

thought, we find another significant variation of his fifth thesis. Foucault writes: “[t]here is no power without potential refusal or revolt.”⁷⁷⁵ Here, the question of resistance is not posed in terms of the dynamic between power and resistance, but rather as the radical potentiality for revolt inherent within all relations of power. Insofar as power cannot, according to Foucault, exist without the potentiality for revolt, Foucault’s point is to demonstrate the ways in which “[e]very power relationship implies, at least in potentia, a strategy of struggle.”⁷⁷⁶ In terms of this potentiality, Foucault’s fifth thesis can be understood as developing an agonistic understanding of power, in which the condition of possibility of power is not simply the permanent presence of resistance, but the potentiality of resistance to transform a relation of power into a relation of struggle. In other words, Foucault not only demonstrates how resistance is required as a condition of power, but also how this condition is attested to in the way that power necessarily refers to the potentiality of resistance. *Resistance is primary with power insofar as the capacity of power necessarily implies a radical potentiality of revolt—that is, the potential to transform a power relation into a relation of struggle. Because the permanence of resistance means that a relation of power can always be transformed into a relation of struggle, the primacy of resistance locates a specific dimension of agonism at the center of power relations.*

Finally, critical theories seeking to locate the problem of power in “the primary existence of a central point,” either “embodied in the state apparatus,” or in the “unique source of sovereignty,” all fail to recognize what Foucault refers under his fifth thesis as the “strictly relational character of power relationships.”⁷⁷⁷ Whereas, the relational character of power as outlined in the second thesis from *The History of Sexuality* first nominates the ways in which power relations do not exist in a “position of exteriority with respect to other types of relations (economic processes, knowledge relationships, sexual relations),” but are instead “immanent” within these relations, the fifth thesis further complicates and extends this claim to the problem of resistance.⁷⁷⁸ Inasmuch as Foucault speaks of a certain “knowledge/power,” the term *power/resistance* can be added

⁷⁷⁵ Michel Foucault, “Omnes Et Singulatim: Towards a Critique of Political Reason,” 324.

⁷⁷⁶ Michel Foucault, “Subject and Power,” 346.

⁷⁷⁷ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 93; 95.

⁷⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 95.

to Foucault's lexicon in order to nominate the inherent relation between power and resistance. As Foucault further clarifies, the field of power relations might be redefined as power/resistance since the very "existence" of relations of power "depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance."⁷⁷⁹ As a critical modification of the traditional conception of power, what is at stake in the claim "where there is power, there is resistance," is to demonstrate an inherent and corresponding relation between power and resistance, whereby the existence of power does not assume the principle of an *archē* as its foundational basis, but instead the permanent potentiality of resistance. While the fifth thesis can be read as the conceptual hinge required for Foucault's analytic of power, there is therefore a final way in which the concept of resistance is found to radically modify the traditional conceptualization of power. *A relation of power and the dynamic field to which it refers and consists is never in a position of exteriority with respect to the permanent potentiality of resistance; resistance is primary since it is co-extensively relational with power relations. Consequently, the analytic of power and the dynamic field to which it refers must be discursively and materially rewritten as power/resistance. Yet, as a consequence to this dynamic, power relations are genuinely an-archic for Foucault since a relation of power always implies, "in potentia," the permanence of its own impossibility.*

There are thus four preliminary ways in which Foucault's non-sovereign and non-economic analysis of power relations not only vitally turns upon the question of resistance, but also upon the unique assertion that resistance as such is situated in a relation of primacy with power. Indeed, in addition to the non-sovereign economic analysis of power relations, Foucault's fifth thesis invokes the concept of resistance as the pivotal turning point from which his analytic both begins and depends. First and foremost, the proposition "[w]here there is power, there is resistance," posits that the domain in which power exists and is manifest coincides with the immanent potentiality of resistance; resistance, in its most preliminary form, is therefore situated in a position of primacy with respect to power. Secondly, insofar as resistance is taken as primary with power, then the permanent presence of resistance amongst this dynamic dislocates the sovereign, archic place of power; power does not emanate from the logic of a central

⁷⁷⁹ Ibid, 95.

archē, but is instead coextensive with the permanent possibility of resistance within the domain in which power operates. In the Foucauldian sense, power as such is genuinely *an-archic* since the permanent potentiality of resistance refuses the sovereign foundation of power and therefore designates the principle whereby power relations cannot solidify into pure relations of domination. Third, insofar as it is to be differentiated from relations of obedience and domination, power's condition of possibility is itself found within the potential for resistance that marks the terrain of power as such. Strictly speaking, this means that power cannot exist or become manifest for Foucault without the potential condition of resistance. Finally, relations of power and the domain in which they operate are never in a position of exteriority with respect to the possibility of resistance.

In the above analysis pertaining to the way in which Foucault's fifth thesis modifies the traditional conceptions of power and dislocates its place within a sovereign center, resistance is found to exist and is theoretically situated in a position of primacy with respect to the domain of power. By referring to a much more complex dynamic in which resistance marks a constituent component, Foucault's analytic of power itself resists the transcendental and material logic of the archē as the radical foundation for power, and therefore offers key insight into the formation of an alternative political rationality consequent of the problematic of resistance. If resistance can be understood as attaining a position of primacy with power to the point where the latter cannot be conceived without regard to the potentiality of the former, what is at stake in Foucault's fifth thesis is that the dynamic field of power relations is necessarily coupled with the potential field of resistance. By placing resistance in a primary relation with power Foucault's intention is to speak of a certain theoretical and material dependency of power on resistance; the appearance of power can only be conceived and become manifest on condition of the potentiality of resistance. In other words, what is ultimately at stake in fifth thesis is that insofar as a relation of power can only exist at the points where there is the potential possibility of resistance, then what Foucault uncovers is a radically new basis from which to read the question of politics and the political from the perspective of resistance.

By formulating a rupture in the logic of the archē, which has hitherto shaped the traditional discourse for political theory, Foucault's fifth thesis redefines power on

condition of resistance in such a way that its position of primacy designates resistance as both a permanent invariant of power, as well as an alternative principle of intelligibility from which the dynamic field of power can be made discernible. By designating the space of resistance amongst the power/resistance dynamic as a permanent invariant inherent to power, Foucault's fifth thesis indicates a radical rupture in the political rationality that traditionally reduces the question of power to the logic of an archē. In relation to the way in which the permanence of resistance radically modifies the traditional concept of power, Foucauldian resistance as such might be better be referred to as an *anarchist invariant of power* since the potentiality for revolt, which marks the condition of possibility of power, signifies the very limit of power, of archē.

Furthermore, the question of resistance in Foucault's thought can be understood as an anarchist invariant of power since the permanent potentiality of resistance amongst power relations is what, according to Foucault, prevents the field of power from becoming reduced to the effects of both domination and obedience. By redefining the concept of resistance as an anarchist invariant of power, what I refer to as the primacy of resistance is set to elucidate the ways in which the potential for revolt that marks the condition of possibility of power dislocates the place of power from its sovereign center and redefines its domain as the agonistic field of force relations oscillating between the exercise of power and the counter-movements of resistance.

While Foucault's fifth thesis can be read as a critical modification of the more traditional concepts of power in terms of the way in which he radically inscribes resistance into its domain, this same thesis equally emphasizes a new way to rethink the traditional question of resistance amongst this dynamic. That is, the way in which Foucault's fifth thesis asserts the primacy of resistance radically reveals an alternative way to reconceive the logic of historical struggle. With the central task of redefining a critical conception of resistance, it is now important to address how this thesis modifies the concept of resistance by ascribing a position of primacy to it. First, despite my use of the term "primacy" as a critical modifier for the concept of Foucauldian resistance, this amendment is not set, however, to suggest that resistance predates, or is prior to, relations of power. As Foucault clearly maintains, resistance "does not predate the power it

opposes,” but is instead “coextensive with it [power] and absolutely its contemporary.”⁷⁸⁰ Similar to the way in which resistance is a condition of possibility for power, the co-extensive relation Foucault draws between power and resistance means that the latter fundamentally relies upon the form of power it opposes in order to be characterized as such. To speak of the primacy of resistance is therefore not to suggest a space for resistance either transcendent or prior to the existence of a relation of power, but in terms of a contemporaneously mutual and coextensive relation between resistance and the forms of power it opposes. Commenting of this coextensive relation between power and resistance, Kelly suggests how the fact that resistance is primary with power “does not mean that resistance actually *is* to be found wherever there is power, but rather only implies that the potential for resistance is ever-present” (original emphasis).⁷⁸¹ In other words, Foucault’s claim that “where there is power, there is resistance” does not mean that each relation of power is always and necessarily confronted by a form of resistance, but that the prospect for such resistance must remain an inherent and permanent possibility within the dynamic of power. At the same time as the co-extensive relation between power and resistance designates resistance as a permanent component of power relations, this same relation is set to demonstrate how the manifestation of forms of resistance are directly tied to the forms of power with which it struggles. Since resistance, as Foucault maintains, is absolutely contemporaneous with specific forms of power, there can be no claim for a transcendental source outside of power from which resistance becomes possible. In its position of primacy, then, Foucauldian resistance is not to be understood as a mere reactive response to the deployment of power, but can instead be redefined as *a vital component, co-extensive with field of power as such, whereby the term primacy denotes the permanent possibility and relational specificity of resistance amongst power relations.*

To claim that resistance is primary with power is first set designate the condition by which a relation of power cannot be conceived or practiced without the permanent possibility of resistance. It is by designating resistance as a permanent, and therefore primary, component of the dynamic field of power relations, that Foucault’s fifth thesis

⁷⁸⁰ Michel Foucault, “Power and Sex,” 122.

⁷⁸¹ Mark Kelly, *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, 107.

begins to reveal an alternative critical conception of what is meant by the term “resistance” in the power/resistance dynamic. Similar to the way in which the materiality of power within Foucault’s analytic is not conceived as a “substance,” what is at stake in the fifth thesis on power is not to posit a “substance of resistance versus a substance of power.”⁷⁸² Thus, while Foucault finds resistance to be situated in a relation of primacy, there is “no soul of revolt” or essential substance from which this claim to primacy can be made, but instead a “plurality of resistances” marking the permanent potential for revolt coextensive with the domain of power.⁷⁸³ In this regard, while resistance is not to be understood as an essence or “substance,” May has shown that the permanent potential for resistance means that Foucault importantly “finds resistance to be immanent to the power relationship.”⁷⁸⁴ Despite the fact resistance is situated in a position of primacy in terms of its permanent and co-extensive relation with the field of power, this condition of primacy is itself attested to by virtue of the immanence of resistance to power. To be sure, resistance is immanent to power, according to Foucault, since the latter’s “existence...depends on a multiplicity of points of resistance”—that is, resistance is immanent to the field of power since its permanent potentiality marks the condition of possibility of power as such.⁷⁸⁵ Resistance—indeed, the “plurality” of resistances—are immanent amongst relations of power; the multiplicity of force relations composing the domain of power coincides with the networks of resistance immanent within the field of power.

Yet, the question of immanency amongst the power/resistance dynamic is also found to modify the concept of resistance since its condition of possibility fundamentally relies upon its struggle with power. In other words, the materiality of resistance relies upon the forms of power it opposes; resistance cannot therefore be posited as a substance transcendent or external to power, but only that which is intimately bound to the form of power with which it struggles. Foucault’s fifth thesis thus demonstrates how the capacity for power coincides with the immanent capacity of a counter-force realized in forms of resistance. While it is possible to designate the primacy of resistance in terms of its

⁷⁸² Michel Foucault, “Power and Sex,” 123.

⁷⁸³ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 96.

⁷⁸⁴ Todd May, *Between Genealogy and Epistemology*, 115.

⁷⁸⁵ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 96.

permanent and coextensive relation with the dynamic of power relations, it is also possible to understand the primacy of resistance in terms of its immanency. Insofar as Foucault is understood as making a vital claim for the immanency of resistance amongst the dynamic field of power, his fifth thesis fundamentally reveals that the historical possibility of power is simultaneously the potential counter-history of its own impossibility. Yet, it is precisely because Foucault finds resistance to be immanent to power relations that the very domain in which power operates can be redefined as a “relationship of confrontation,” or “strategy of struggle.”⁷⁸⁶ *The immanency of resistance to power reveals, for Foucault, that the domain of power—now written power/resistance—is itself a field of agonism, of confrontations, and of forms of struggle with the exercise of power.*

Insofar as power can only exist on condition of resistance, the fact that resistance is immanent to power means for Foucault that the domain in which power refers can always become transformed into a strategy of struggle in which power relations might become reversed. What Foucault refers to as “power” thus designates an agonistic field of struggle, and his fifth thesis is set to capture this important distinction. If resistance is immanent to the dynamic field of power relations this is due, as Foucault claims, to the way in which the permanent potential of resistance implies how at “every moment, the relationship of power may become a confrontation between two adversaries.”⁷⁸⁷

Foucault’s point here is to account for the ways in which a power relation can always be transformed into a relation of “confrontation” or “struggle” consequent upon the primacy of resistance amongst this dynamic. In other words, what makes the logic of the primacy of resistance so crucial for Foucault is how the permanent potentiality of resistance reveals as agonistic basis at the center of his analytic of power. In its condition of primacy, resistance according to Foucault, is to be defined neither as a mere reactive counter-force deployed in response to power, nor a transcendent essence external to power; instead resistance defines the condition from which a relation of power comes up against its own limit and can be transformed into an agonistic strategy of struggle. *Since the permanent potential of resistance marks the condition that intensifies relations of*

⁷⁸⁶ Michel Foucault, “Subject and Power,” 347.

⁷⁸⁷ Ibid, 347.

power to their limit points by transforming the field of power into a site of confrontation and struggle, the very dynamic of power/resistance attested to in the fifth thesis redesignates the field of power in its anarchic specificity—that is, as agōn.

While Foucault's claim regarding how a relation of power can always be transformed into a struggle seems to invoke a return to the adversarial model as found in Schmitt's theory of the political, Foucault's agonistic model is to be critically distinguished by its fundamental reference to the place of resistance amongst this conception. While Schmitt's theory rests on the presupposition of sovereign power—in which the distinction between adversaries is made only in reference to the state—Foucault, however, fundamentally reverses this claim, and maintains that the permanent potential for revolt or primacy of resistance is what makes possible an agonistic struggle between adversaries. Thus, unlike Schmitt who posits an adversarial model in terms of a struggle between two nation-states, Foucault's analytic of power instead posits that a relation of power can only become transformed into a relation of agonism on condition of resistance. Thus, when Foucault speaks of a "confrontation between two adversaries" he means to designate the struggle between the art of governing on one side, and "a confrontation with those whom one governs" on the other.⁷⁸⁸ In the previous chapter, we saw how the history of power exercised as government historically coincides for Foucault with the "art of not being governed." With the primacy of resistance marking the condition by which a relation of power can be transformed into a "confrontation with those whom one governs," it is clear that the power/resistance dynamic represents the conceptual basis from which this "art of not being governed" becomes visible. In other words, inasmuch as both power and resistance are not to be understood in terms of an essence or substance this means, however, for Foucault that the power/resistance dynamic ought to be analyzed in terms of an agonistic struggle between power exercised as government and the art of not being governed.

Insofar as resistance, according to Foucault, is the agent that reveals the agonistic dimension specific to the field of power, his fifth thesis can be read not only as a vital attempt to account for the permanence of resistance amongst the network of power, but also the dimension of struggle inherent to power relations as such. It is in this way that

⁷⁸⁸ Ibid, 347.

Foucault begins to rethink how the domain of power refers to the dynamic field in which “between a relationship of power and a strategy of struggle there is a reciprocal appeal, a perpetual linking and a perpetual reversal.”⁷⁸⁹ To be sure, Foucault’s fifth thesis is set to highlight this “perpetual linking” or nexus between power and resistance in such a way that highlights how the primacy of resistance marks the principle of intelligibility from which power can be analyzed as an agonistic struggle between power exercised as government and the art of not being governed. Against the criticism that Foucault’s analytic of power cannot account for the possibility of resistance, the fifth thesis clarifies how resistance is permanently inscribed as an immanent and vital component to the domain in which power operates. Yet, Foucault takes this a step further and argues that it is because resistance is primary with power that the field to which power refers is radically reopened as an agonistic field of struggle situated at the horizon of the state and governmentality. In this regard, it is my contention that Foucault’s fifth thesis and the subsequent logic of the primacy of resistance contained therein must be read as reopening the field of power in its anarchic specificity—that is as *agōn*. This is to say that while Foucault understands power within the field of government, a specific form of power exercised as a “management of possibilities,” the fact that resistance marks the principle from which the field of power can be transformed into a relation of struggle, radically dislocates the field of power from its monopolization within the exercise of governmentality.⁷⁹⁰ Thus, insofar as the exercise of power is defined as the “government of men by other men—in the broadest sense of the term,” Foucault writes that one necessarily “includes an important element: freedom.”⁷⁹¹ On condition of the primacy of resistance, the field of power exercised as government is reopened as a radical space of freedom in which the existence of power is parallel to its own impossibility animated in movements of resistance. For Foucault, then, *the site of resistance is also the site of a radical form of freedom.*

If the exercise of power as governmentality requires and turns upon the concept of “freedom,” this theory of freedom is only made possible due to the logic of the primacy

⁷⁸⁹ Ibid, 347.

⁷⁹⁰ Ibid, 341.

⁷⁹¹ Ibid, 342.

of resistance. Thus, in 1984 Foucault affirms the relation between this radical condition of freedom and the primacy of resistance:

In order for power relations to come into play, there must be a certain degree of freedom on both sides... This means that in power relations there is necessarily the possibility of resistance because if there were no possibility of resistance (of violent resistance, flight, deception, strategies capable of reversing the situation), there would be no power relations at all.⁷⁹²

Here, Foucault retrospectively highlights the way in which the primacy of resistance redesignates the field of power as a site of potential freedom—that is, on condition of the “possibility of resistance,” the field of power requires a conception of freedom in order to account for the capability of “reversing the situation.” As Foucault reiterates, then, “as soon as there is a power relation, there is a possibility of resistance. We can never be ensnared by power: we can always modify its grip in determinate conditions and according to a precise strategy.”⁷⁹³ More fundamentally, then, the radical inscription of the permanent potential of revolt into the field of power relations means that resistance designates the point by which one is never fully “ensnared by power.” The primacy of resistance is not attested to by a position, either anterior or exterior to power, but as a permanent and immanent possibility of freedom amongst the dynamic to which power consists; power is therefore not itself absolute, but coextensive with the permanent potential of resistance and freedom. Consequently, however, this means that in its position of primacy, resistance is redefined by Foucault as that which designates a radical condition of freedom made possible by its permanence within the dynamic field of power relations. The fact that resistance is primary with power reveals an alternative principle from which the exercise of governmentality can never solidify as a relations of pure domination, but only that which, on condition of resistance, is reopened as a potential site of freedom.

Fundamentally, then, while the fifth thesis posits that resistance is necessarily co-extensive and immanent to the field of power with which it struggles, the fact that question of resistance turns upon a radical condition of freedom further elucidates the

⁷⁹² Michel Foucault, “The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom,” 292.

⁷⁹³ Michel Foucault, “Power and Sex,” 123.

ways in which the place of resistance amongst this dynamic cannot ultimately be reduced to a reactive force truncated by power from the beginning. Although resistance, as Foucault suggests, is intimately bound to the forms of power it opposes, it is a mistake to conceive of resistance as “only a reaction or rebound, forming with respect to the basic domination an underside that is in the end always passive, doomed to perpetual defeat.”⁷⁹⁴ Rather than simply forming the reactive, passive counter-part of power, Foucault maintains instead that points of resistance form “the odd term in relations of power; they are inscribed in the latter as an irreducible opposite.”⁷⁹⁵ Foucault clarifies here that resistance is permanently inscribed within a relation of power, and yet maintains that this resistance can be seen as belonging to power in such a way that it cannot be reduced to the techniques of power—that is, resistance is defined as an “irreducible opposite,” co-extensive with power relations. Deleuze affirms this idea and argues that points of resistances “are not simply the ‘repercussion’ or ‘passive’ side of the former but are rather the ‘irreducible encounter’ between the two, especially if we understand that the force affected has a certain capacity for resistance.”⁷⁹⁶ Here, Deleuze affirms that resistance is irreducible to power, because the latter contains the capacity for the counter-force of resistance. This is to say that while resistance depends upon relations of power in a similar manner to the way in which power relies upon the potentiality for resistance, the capacity for resistance is nevertheless irreducible in this relation because the counter-force of its realization marks both the condition of possibility and limit of power.

This means, however, that what is at stake in the fifth thesis is not simply that power ought to be redefined in a way attested to by the permanence of resistance but, more fundamentally, to describe the ways in which the capacity of power directly corresponds and coincides with the immanent potential of its own counter-force, from which Foucault invokes the concept of resistance to describe this possibility. *Resistance as such is redefined by Foucault as the counter-force of revolt immanent within the deployment of power relations that wards off power as such.* Although resistance can never be severed from the relations of power with which it struggles, the former is

⁷⁹⁴ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 96.

⁷⁹⁵ Ibid, 96.

⁷⁹⁶ Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, 71.

irreducible amongst this dynamic since it is through the immanent capacity of revolt that a relation of power reaches its limit and becomes intensified in terms of a confrontation between those who are governed and those who govern. “Hence,” Foucault writes, “they too are distributed in irregular fashion: the points, knots, or focuses of resistance are spread over time and space at varying densities, at times mobilizing groups or individuals in definitive way, inflaming certain points of the body, certain moments in life, certain types of behavior.”⁷⁹⁷ In other words, while resistance is immanent to power and cannot be conceived outside of this relation, its permanent potential amongst relations of power designates a parallel, yet heterogeneous, networked field of resistance “spread over time and space.”

It is because Foucault’s fifth thesis has the effect of reversing the traditional perception of power, that the place of resistance within the domain of power/resistance is reformulated as the paradigm that makes power visible as such. Resistance, then, is irreducible to power since in order to view the operability of power in its quotidian form one has to begin, according to Foucault, by invoking points of resistance as the principle of intelligibility of power; points of resistance are therefore indispensable for the analysis of relations of power as such. Consequently, then, as Foucault maintains, inherent within the power/resistance dynamic is “the ability to decipher the same events and the same transformations either from inside the history of struggle or from the standpoint of the power relationships.”⁷⁹⁸ It is important to note here the way Foucault stresses how an analytic of power can be interpreted either from “inside” the history of resistance or from the perspective of power. In other words, the fifth thesis is not simply a commentary regarding how the field of power necessarily coincides with the field of resistance, but that the very dynamic power/resistance reveals a new perspective from which to read the field of power in terms of its agonistic dimension. Yet, while Foucault maintains that the field of power can either be read from the perspective of power or from within the perspective of resistance, his own work is firmly situated within the critical perspective of the later. Thus “in order to understand what power relations are about” Foucault writes, “perhaps we should investigate the forms of resistance and attempts made to dissociate

⁷⁹⁷ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 96.

⁷⁹⁸ Michel Foucault, “Subject and Power,” 347.

these relations.”⁷⁹⁹ In other words, given that the history of political thought and practice is traditionally reduced to the paradigms of sovereign power and governmentality, Foucault instead maintains that the operability of power can instead be determined from “inside the history of struggle”—that is, from history of resistance.

Yet, the question of resistance is additionally found to be the motor of power in Foucault’s thought because it marks the condition of potential transformation by which relations of power can become reversed as a strategy of struggle; resistance therefore designates the point in which relation of power can be retranslated into a radical space of freedom made possible in its struggle with the forms of power it opposes. We might therefore consider the primacy of resistance as the motor of power relations in two manners: as its condition of possibility, and as that which precipitates a possible transformation of power. In an interview, Foucault directly situates his fifth thesis in relation to these two points and further clarifies that resistance ought to be understood as the primary component of the dynamic between power and resistance. Foucault writes:

You see, if there was no resistance, there would be no power relations. Because it would simply be a matter of obedience. You have to use power relations to refer to the situation where you’re not doing what you want. So resistance comes first, and resistance remains superior to the forces of the process; power relations are obliged to change with resistance. So I think that *resistance* is the main word, *the key word*, in this dynamic (original emphasis).⁸⁰⁰

Again, alluding to the primacy of resistance, Foucault maintains that what is at stake in this analytic is not simply a redefinition of power, but rather that resistance marks the “key word” amongst the dynamic to which power refers. On one side of the question, resistance is to be understood as the “key word” in relations of power, because “resistance comes first,” and is therefore in a position of primacy with respect to the power dynamic. As a consequence to the power/resistance dynamic, Foucault begins to indicate how points of resistance are what make possible an alternative critical framework from which to read the dynamic of power—that is, “resistance comes first”

⁷⁹⁹ Ibid, 329.

⁸⁰⁰ Michel Foucault, “Sex, Power, and the Politics of Identity,” 167.

for Foucault because it is what marks the principle of intelligibility that renders the concrete operability of power relations discernible as such.

At the same time, however, resistance is also key to the dynamic of power, because it is what precipitates the possibility of transformation in the exercise of power as government, and therefore “remains superior to the process.” In this way, while the primacy of resistance marks a new grid of intelligibility for relations of power, this same idea is what Foucault maintains allows for a possible transformation amongst the deployment of power. As Deleuze notes, Foucault’s fifth thesis has the effect of demonstrating how relations of “force display potentiality [that] presents itself as the possibility of resistance...in such a way as to make change possible.”⁸⁰¹ Thus, the potentiality for resistance within relations of power is irreducible amongst this relation since resistance is the condition from which the exercise of government can become transformed into a fundamental struggle with the ones whom one governs. In its position of primacy, resistance is irreducible in that it pinpoints the limit of power and acts as the principle of intelligibility from which to read power relations, while at the same time forming the locus that reopens the field of power as a field of potential freedom.

With the above outline regarding the vital manner in which Foucault’s fifth thesis radically modifies the way in which the question of resistance can be situated in a relation of primacy within the power/resistance dynamic, it is now possible to demonstrate what I hold to be one of the penultimate claims in *The History of Sexuality*. Foucault’s fifth thesis not only acts as the conceptual nexus from which the analytic of power as found in *The History of Sexuality* depends, but also and more fundamentally that *the primacy of resistance designates the historical motor of power as such*. By claiming that resistance designates the historical motor of power relations, I mean to point toward the way in which Foucault’s fifth thesis critically amends Marx and Engels’s famous thesis that the “history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle,” in which the substance of this struggle is defined as the “antagonism of oppressing and oppressed classes.”⁸⁰² In Foucault’s thought, it is not simply “class struggle” that acts as the radical

⁸⁰¹ Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, 89.

⁸⁰² Karl Marx and Frederic Engels, “Manifesto of the Communist Party,” in *The Portable Karl Marx*, ed. Eugene Kamenka (New York: Penguin Books, 1983), 203; 216.

agent that gives human history its historicity as such, but more specifically the primacy of resistance which, as we have seen, is the condition upon which the exercise of government is transformed into a fundamental confrontation with those whom one governs. Thus, for Foucault:

revolts belong to history...People do revolt; that is a fact. And that is how subjectivity (not that of great men, but that of anyone) is brought into history, breathing life into it...All the disenchantments of history won't alter the fact of the matter: it is because there are such voices that the time of human beings does not have the form of evolution but that of "history," precisely.⁸⁰³

It is in this way that rather than invoking the concept of "class struggle" as the agent of history, Foucault instead maintains that the "enigma of revolt" is the motivating force of history. Thus, while Foucault affirms that history can indeed be read as a history of struggle, he maintains that the varying forms of revolt cannot, however, be reduced to the totalizing notion of class struggle. In other words, Foucault's fifth thesis not only forms the basis from which a non-sovereign analysis of power relations can be based, but also a non-Marxist approach to the history of struggle. In light of the power/resistance dynamic, the fifth thesis can be read in the following manner: *"[w]here there is power, there is resistance" posits that it is resistance, and neither the paradigm of government nor the theory of sovereignty, that acts as the basic motor of power relations as such. Instead, resistance is the fundamental motor of power relations since it is on condition of its position of primacy that the exercise of power as government can be transformed into a relation of struggle between the art of governing and the art of not being governed, without which the field of power could only be rendered discernible as a binary relation of domination and pure obedience.*

We have seen how Foucault's fifth thesis posits a coextensive relation between power and resistance in such a way that resistance attains a position of primacy in regard to power and is therefore to be taken as a permanent component of the dynamic to which power refers. The primacy of resistance not only radically modifies the traditional concept of power, but also the traditional conceptualizations of emancipatory struggle in such a way that offers an alternative manner from which to read the field of power in

⁸⁰³ Michel Foucault, "Useless to Revolt?", 447-452.

terms of an agōn. To be sure, Foucault's fifth thesis has the effect of both redefining power on condition of resistance, as well as offering a critical redefinition of what is meant by the term resistance amongst this relation. Because resistance is what is presupposed by power, Foucault valorizes resistance as the irreducible "key word" in the dynamic between the two concepts. "[A]nd yet," as Foucault writes in a way that critically modifies the first component of the fifth thesis, "or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power."⁸⁰⁴ While the primacy of resistance both disrupts the place of power and remains a permanent possibility within power itself, the consequence of this additionally demonstrates that the materiality of resistance derives its specificity from a relation of power and is therefore not to be conceived as "outside" or external to its place within this dynamic. As Kelly notes, "while resistance in general 'comes first,' specific resistance does not come into existence until power appears."⁸⁰⁵ In this way, although resistance is primary with power, this relation of primacy is attested to by what can be referred to through Foucault's fifth thesis as the *principle of non-exteriority*, or the way in which resistance is realized in its relation to the form of power it opposes. It is in this consequent second part of his fifth thesis that Foucault begins to pinpoint and elaborate a preliminary rationale to describe the space of the political in terms of a permanent sphere of agonism attested to by the power/resistance dynamic. In its principle of non-exteriority, the question of resistance—indeed, its primacy—must neither be conceived in terms of a central source transcendent to power, nor as a material essence anterior to power, but as a constituent component actively bound to the power it opposes and resists.

Without a transcendent point from which to ground a theory or praxis of resistance, what is ultimately at stake for Foucault is to demonstrate how the principle of non-exteriority reveals an alternative manner from which the materiality of resistance can in fact be considered without reducing the question of revolt to the Hegelian notion of dialectic negation, or subsuming all forms of resistance under the alleged universality of class struggle. "Hence," Foucault writes in the passage following the fifth thesis, if resistance is always in a position of non-exteriority with relations of power then "there is

⁸⁰⁴ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 96.

⁸⁰⁵ Mark Kelly, *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, 108.

no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary.”⁸⁰⁶ While, Foucault’s critics tend to take this principle as a theoretical impasse in which he cannot account for the possibility of resistance, I instead affirm this notion as a way to think through how Foucault’s fifth thesis marks out a terrain from which a critical caesura between the paradigm of an archē that grounds power in the problem of sovereignty and a fundamental agonistic dynamic that takes into account the primacy of resistance can be found. In its position of non-exteriority, Foucault’s fifth thesis reveals the power/resistance dynamic as a permanent domain of agonism between forces, and thus a new way to understand the question of politics consequent upon this dynamic. In its position of non-exteriority, resistance *arises within, and cannot be separated from, the space of struggle made possible by its realization amongst power relations. This space of struggle is not prior to the deployment of power relations, but that which is realized and animated by resistance.*

In its most preliminary form, Foucault’s assertion that the primacy of resistance is attested to by a position of non-exteriority, radically denies any claim for a transcendental source or pure law of resistance, while highlighting its agonistic specificity. Without a transcendental or theoretical “source of all rebellions,” Foucault’s point is to problematize the place of resistance, and to subsequently reveal a new rationale that can account for the materiality of revolt within a permanent sphere of agonism. In an interview given shortly after the publication of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault emphasizes that while “power is co-extensive with the social body,” the consequence to this dynamic means that “there are no spaces of primal liberty between the meshes of its network.”⁸⁰⁷ Foucault’s reference to the space of “primal liberty” invokes Hobbes’s conception of “nature” as a space of “absolute liberty” pre-existent to and outside of the

⁸⁰⁶ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 95-96. On Foucault’s reference to the “Great Refusal,” see: Herbert Marcuse, *One-Dimensional Man* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1991), 257. In line with the Frankfurt school’s redevelopment of Marxist theory and cultural critique in relation new developments in modern capitalist society, the goal of Marcuse’s text is to locate revolutionary opposition to capitalism not in the traditional notion of the ‘proletariat,’ but in the minorities who refuse to “play the game” (257). Foucault’s critique of Marcuse’s “Great Refusal” is directed at the way in which it remains theoretically founded on the Hegelian notion of negativity in which the question of revolt in refusal is nevertheless reduced to a simple all-encompassing logic that attempts to prescribe a universal form to revolt. To be sure, Foucault’s fifth thesis should, in part, be understood against the background of Marcuse’s work in this text.

⁸⁰⁷ Michel Foucault, “Power and Strategies,” 142.

advent of sovereignty.⁸⁰⁸ In other words, by “spaces of primal liberty” Foucault wants to designate a foundation prior to the space of power from which might act as the essential foundation from which resistance might arise. If there are no primal spaces of liberty outside of power, Foucault’s consequent claim regarding the non-exteriority of resistance to power demonstrates that the logic of resistance cannot invoke a place outside of power—either theoretically or materially—in order to justify its existence. Rather than a single source, or essence prior to and outside of power, that acts as the foundation for the possibility of resistance, Foucault maintains:

there is a plurality of resistances, each of them a special case: resistances that are possible, necessary, improbable; others that are spontaneous, savage, solitary, concerted, rampant, or violent; still others that are quick to compromise, interested, or sacrificial; by definition, they can only exist in the strategic field of power relations.⁸⁰⁹

Here, in regard to the principle of non-exteriority, Foucault maintains that resistance is itself enmeshed within the “strategic field of power relations”—that is, resistance finds its material basis directly within the form power with which it struggles. Yet, at the same time, rather than presupposing a “pure law” of revolt in which the materiality of resistance could become reduced to the Marxist notion of class struggle, a critical conceptualization of its existence can only be posed in terms of a “plurality of resistances.” Although resistance exists in a relation of primacy with power, the material realization of resistance can only be determined and become known in relation to the form of power with which it struggles. According to Foucault, then, there can be no universal, all-encompassing theory from which to codify revolt, instead the plurality of resistances reveals the dynamic of power as a domain of agonism discernable within the power/resistance dynamic. This, means, however, that while Foucault denies the

⁸⁰⁸ See: Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan*, ed. Richard Tuck, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 245. Here Hobbes writes, “[t]hat the condition of meer (sic) Nature, that is to say, of absolute liberty, such as theirs, that neither Sovereigns, not Subjects, is Anarchy, and the condition of Warre (sic).” As is well known, Hobbes draws a clear distinction between the condition of nature, or the condition of pure liberty, in which the term “anarchy” invokes a space and condition of humankind prior to the advent of sovereignty (see: chapter xiii, “On the Natural Condition of Mankind, as Concerning their Felicity, and Misery”).

⁸⁰⁹ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 96.

absolute exteriority of resistance, he simultaneously relocates its materiality *within the dynamic of struggle from which it arises and is manifest*.

Without any “primal spaces of liberty” acting as the source of resistance, the consequent component of the fifth thesis ought to be read as making a critical commentary on traditional conceptualizations of resistance. In its position of non-exteriority, there is not a point of departure outside of power from which resistance emanates or can be justified; one does not begin to engage with the question of resistance by looking outside of the relation of power with which it struggles, nor by attempting to universally subsume all forms of resistance under a single revolutionary logic. For Newman, then, instead of presupposing the “revolutionary transcendence of law, perhaps radical politics can be more productively thought today in terms of localized forms of resistance at the interstices of law and power.”⁸¹⁰ Indeed, it is on this point that we must attempt to understand Foucault’s key contribution to anarchist theory. Rather than searching for a transcendental ground outside and prior to power from which to premise a theory of resistance, Foucault maintains that the place of resistance “is not anterior to the power it opposes.”⁸¹¹ As Foucault confirms in an interview from 1982 resistance is not prior, but intimately bound to relations of power: “resistance is part of this strategic relationship of which power consists.”⁸¹² Thus “resistance,” as Foucault continues, therefore “really always relies upon the situation against which it struggles.”⁸¹³ Just as Foucault demonstrates that there is a certain dependence of power on resistance, the question of resistance is analogously shown to rely upon the relation of power “against which it struggles.” In this sense, the consequent component of the fifth thesis modifies the original claim in a significant way, while revealing a preliminary rationale to account for the material manifestation of resistance. While resistance, in its coextensive and contemporaneous relation to power, this claim to primacy neither invokes nor is derived from a position transcendent to power, but is instead found to be located at the precise points in which power is exercised. *Conditioned by its principle of non-exteriority, the*

⁸¹⁰ Saul Newman, “Anarchism and Law: Towards a Post-Anarchist Ethics of Disobedience,” 310.

⁸¹¹ Michel Foucault, *Foucault Live: Collected Interviews, 1961-1984*. Edited by Sylvère Lotringer. California: Semiotext(e), 1996), 224.

⁸¹² Michel Foucault, “Sex, Power, and the Politics of Identity,” 168.

⁸¹³ *Ibid*, 168.

primacy of resistance is not attested to by a pre-existent space either prior or outside of power; instead the space of resistance is to be found precisely at the points of power's operability against which it struggles.

That there are no primal spaces of liberty outside of relations of power does not, however, foreclose the possibility of resistance, but instead renders its presence and existence more acute for Foucault. To be sure, it is precisely because the space of resistance is located within its struggle with power, that Foucault testifies to the existence and effectivity of resistance as such. In this way, when Foucault further contextualizes the primacy of resistance, he additionally affirms that this principle of non-exteriority is what allows for a new way to engage with the question of historical struggle. Far from negating the possibility of resistance, Foucault maintains:

there are no relations of power without resistances; the latter are all the more real and effective because they are formed right at the point where relations of power are exercised; resistance to power does not have to come from elsewhere to be real, nor is it inexorably frustrated through being the compatriot of power. It exists all the more by being in the same place as power; hence, like power, resistance is multiple and can be integrated in global strategies.⁸¹⁴

Rather than the foreclosing the possibility of resistance, we see that the principle of non-exteriority is what characterizes the very possibility of its existence. Instead of invoking a universal theory that attests to the reality of resistance, as is often the case in radical political theories, resistance is according to Foucault found to be all the “more real” not because it comes from “elsewhere,” but because its very realization arises from, and corresponds with, its material struggle with power. Hence, “it does not have to come from elsewhere to be real”—that is, the actuality of resistance is attested to and made more “effective” by its realization of a struggle with power, and neither by an exterior position prior to a relation of power, nor a revolutionary transcendence of power. In this way, the principle of non-exteriority holds that a theory of resistance cannot be based off of the logic of a pure outside, but instead finds its logic in the elaboration of its struggle with a relation of power. *It is within the space of struggle, and not a position of exteriority, that resistance is animated as such; this means, however, that a theory of*

⁸¹⁴ Michel Foucault, “Power and Strategies,” 142.

resistance ought not to presuppose a topological or theoretical position of exteriority prior to its manifestation within a relation of power, but instead an internal dimension of agonism.

Although Foucault's fifth thesis reveals an alternative point of entry from which to account for the permanence of resistance amongst power relations, his critics tend to point toward how his fifth thesis and the corresponding claim regarding non-exteriority of resistance appears as a conceptual impasse that precludes the possibility of a critical emancipation through the notion of resistance. Yet, in several key moments spread throughout his work, Foucault consistently refuses to acknowledge that this principle of non-exteriority means that one is always trapped by a relation of power. Indeed, instead of presupposing a dynamic in which one is always trapped within relations of power, what is at stake for Foucault is to demonstrate how the power/resistance dynamic indicates a condition of radical freedom. Indeed, Foucault tackles this problem in tandem alongside his fifth thesis. "Should it be said" Foucault asks "that one is always 'inside' power, there is no 'escaping' it, there is no absolute outside where it is concerned, because one is subject to the law in any case? Or that...power is the ruse of history, always emerging the winner?"⁸¹⁵ To be sure, while Foucault denies the possibility of a transcendent position outside of power which might act as critical foundation for a theory of resistance, this same logic radically renews, rather than revokes, the possibility of emancipation. Thus, while Foucault maintains that "power is 'always already there,' that one is never 'outside' it, that there are no 'margins' for those who break with the system to gambol in," he further concludes that "this does not entail the necessity of accepting an inescapable form of domination or an absolute privilege on the side of the law. To say that one can never be 'outside' power does not mean that one is trapped and condemned to defeat no matter what."⁸¹⁶

The interdependence Foucault locates between power and the non-exteriority of resistance does not reduce the question of resistance to a mere reaction to power, nor does its position of non-exteriority disclose the possibility of reversing, escaping or moving outside of power. The principle of non-exteriority according to Foucault instead reveals a

⁸¹⁵ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 95.

⁸¹⁶ Michel Foucault, "Power and Strategies," 142.

radical condition of freedom located in the space of struggle made possible through resistance. In a manner that seems to anticipate the criticism that would later he would later come to face, Foucault maintains:

I don't think the word *trapped* is a correct one. It is a struggle, but what I mean by *power relations* is the fact that we are in a strategic situation toward each other...we are in this struggle, and the continuation of this situation can influence the behavior and nonbehavior of the other. So we are not trapped. We are always in this kind of situation. It means that we always have possibilities, there are always possibilities of changing the situation. We cannot jump *outside* the situation, and there is no point where you are free from all power relations. But you can always change it. So what I've said does not mean that we are trapped, but that we are always free—well, anyway, that there is always the possibility of changing (original emphasis).⁸¹⁷

Rather than emphasizing the term “trapped” to describe a conceptual impasse inherent in the power/resistance dynamic, Foucault instead understands this dynamic as a “strategic situation,” and thus invokes a preference for the term “struggle” to describe this dynamic. Yet Foucault also makes an important distinction here regarding the concept of “freedom” within this dynamic. Since there is no position prior or outside the form of power resisted, the radical freedom Foucault locates in the power/resistance dynamic is not set to describe the point where one is, or can ultimately become “free from all power relations;” Foucauldian freedom is not *freedom from*. Instead, the Foucauldian notion of freedom is what is found in the space of struggle made possible by resistance, and refers to the “possibility” of changing the situation to which power consists. It is in regard to the inherent interrelation between resistance and freedom—indeed the freedom arising from resistance—that Foucault attempts to rethink the power/resistance dynamic in a way that presupposes, rather than forecloses, the possibility of lines of flight from relations of power. *This means, however, that the agonistic space of struggle attested to and made possible by resistance is also the condition of radical freedom; yet, the freedom revealed by the power/resistance dynamic does not posit the possibility of an “outside” where one*

⁸¹⁷ Michel Foucault, “Sex, Power, and the Politics of Identity,” 167.

is freed from power, but instead conceives of freedom as a space of struggle made possible in the realization of resistance.

Insofar as the domain of power relations can be rethought as the permanent struggle between the power/resistance dynamic, the above analysis has been set to demonstrate how Foucault maintains that this very domain must therefore be analyzed in the form of an *agōn* rather than in the problem of governmentality, sovereign power and the state. Indeed, what is at stake in Foucault's fifth thesis is that the power/resistance dynamic means that the field of power can be analyzed in terms of permanent struggle, in which the notion of resistance at once designates the condition by which power relations can be transformed into strategies of struggle as well as a point of possible reversal, of potential freedom brought about through the struggle with power. Thus, as Foucault writes:

If it is true that at the heart of power relations and as a permanent condition of their existence there is an insubordination and a certain essential obstinacy on the part of the principles of freedom, then there is no relationship of power without the means of escape or possible flight.⁸¹⁸

By way of summary, Foucault here maintains that relations of power exist as such only on the "permanent condition" of resistance which, in its position of primacy, is both the motor that transforms power relations into a field of struggle as well as the principle from which the "means of escape" become possible. Yet, while power designates a "relationship of confrontation" on condition of the primacy of resistance, Foucault cautions that this field can become a relation of domination "when stable mechanisms replace the *free play of antagonistic reactions*" (original emphasis).⁸¹⁹ Consequently, then, what is ultimately at stake in Foucault's fifth thesis is that the very field of force relations which compose the power/resistance dynamic ought to be redefined as the "free play of antagonistic reactions"—that is, as *agōn*. Herein lies the key to Foucault's analytic; it is only when the primacy of resistance is replaced with "stable mechanisms" that the field of power can designate a relation of domination. Yet, if resistance is taken as a permanent component of the field of power, then as Foucault maintains the very

⁸¹⁸ Michel Foucault, "Subject and Power," 346.

⁸¹⁹ Ibid, 346-347.

dynamic of power/resistance must be understood as the domain of the “free play” of agonistic forces.

4.4 From Power to Politics

*But what makes the domination of a group, a caste, or a class, together with the resistance and revolts that domination comes up against, a central phenomenon in the history of societies is that they manifest in a massive and global form, at the level of the whole social body, the locking together of power relations with relations of strategy and the results proceeding from their interaction.*⁸²⁰

*This point of view of the plebs, the point of view of the underside and limit of power, is thus indispensable for an analysis of its apparatuses (dispositifs); this is the starting point for understanding its functioning and development.*⁸²¹

--Michel Foucault

In one of the more commonly cited passages from *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault writes that “[i]n thought and political analysis we have still not cut off the head of the king.”⁸²² By studying and outlining a non-sovereign analytic of power, Foucault fundamentally attempts to demonstrate one way to critically detach political theory from the juridical foundation of sovereignty that has, in its paradigmatic form, continued to shape the course of Western Political philosophy. Yet, as I have argued throughout this chapter, Foucault’s analytic of power as developed in *The History of Sexuality* itself turns upon, and cannot be separated from, the vital (albeit historically ignored) question of resistance. While Foucault’s analytic of power radically dislocates power from its sovereign foundation, what is at stake in this analytic is that the characteristic feature of power is not that it is omnipotent or absolute, but that the domain of power is itself co-extensive with the permanent potential of resistance amongst this dynamic. Indeed, the key claim from Foucault’s analytic is to suggest that power is neither omnipotent nor absolute, but that its condition of existence depends on the multiplicity of points of resistance; *the key characteristic of Foucault’s analytic is therefore that resistance is primary with power.* Thus, while Foucault’s work in *The History of Sexuality* is often

⁸²⁰ Ibid, 348.

⁸²¹ Michel Foucault, “Power and Strategies,” 138.

⁸²² Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 89.

noted for his critical attempt to account for a non-sovereign analytic of power, this regicide of political theory is made possible in terms of the primacy of resistance. In other words, the power/resistance dynamic is what constitutes the pivotal point from which his regicide of political theory takes place. Indeed, with the primacy of resistance marking the critical terrain from which the traditional paradigms of political theory can be thought, the regicide of political theory is marked by a critical caesura between the political as *archē* and the political as *agōn*—that is, the “free play” between power as the exercise of government and the counter-historical movements of resistance. What is at stake, then, in Foucault’s fifth thesis is not simply a redefinition of power indicative of the permanent presence of resistance, but that the permanent presence of resistance within the dynamic field of power offers key insight into rethinking the basic paradigms of both traditional and radical political theory.

In this chapter, I have argued that Foucault’s fifth thesis from *The History of Sexuality*, which radically inscribes resistance into the dynamic to which power refers, reveals and turns upon a new political logic that can be referred to as the primacy of resistance in which the exercise of power as government radically coincides with the immanent and permanent potential for revolt. In this regard, the overall goal has first been to demonstrate how Foucault’s fifth thesis radically modifies the traditional conceptions of both power and resistance in such a way that the power/resistance dynamic might come to act as the basic principle of intelligibility for an anarchist hypothesis of the political in which the primacy of resistance redesignates the field of power as the exercise of government as itself a field of struggle. In its most preliminary form, we have seen how Foucault’s thesis that resistance is primary with power forms the critical nexus upon which both his analytic of power depends, as well as the conceptual hinge required in order to understand the full complexities of this very analytic. Rather than presupposing the sovereignty of power, Foucault’s fifth thesis radically inscribes resistance into the domain to which power refers, and maintains that the permanent potentiality of resistance is a condition of possibility for relations of power as such. As attested to by the power/resistance dynamic, relations of power, Foucault argues, must be theoretically and materially understood on condition of I have referred to as the anarchist invariant of resistance. In this regard it has been my contention in this chapter that

Foucault's thesis "[w]here there is power, there is resistance," redefines the field of power anarchically.

At the same time, however, as the fifth thesis radically modifies the traditional conception of power, I have argued that the corresponding nexus between power and resistance reveals the agonistic dimension proper to the field of power as such. In its position of non-exteriority, the permanent potentiality of resistance disrupts the sovereign place of power and reopens the field of power as a dynamic domain of struggle. Yet, as that which finds its consistency within a field of struggle, resistance at once designates the motor by the exercise of government can be transformed into an agonistic confrontation with those whom one governs, as well as the condition of freedom made possible in the struggle with power. Taken together, then, the primacy of resistance as broached in Foucault's thought is at once the principle from which the domain in which power operates is retheorized as permanent sphere of agonistic struggle, as well as that which acts as the pivotal possibility for a critical politics of resistance. Resistance can thus be seen as belonging to power in such a way that cannot be reduced to the techniques of power itself; the potentiality for resistance is the anarchic spacing that provides the irreducible condition to both confront and escape the history of governmentality. Conversely, power, according to Foucault, can only be understood on condition of resistance; consequently, however, this means that resistance forms the pivotal point upon which the analytic of power depends in *The History of Sexuality*.

Resulting from Foucault's power/resistance dynamic, the fact that resistance is found to exist in a position of primacy radically denies the latter's traditional place as an absolute substance born in the advent of the sovereign, and forms the first axiom of the anarchic terms of the political. Indeed, it is by invoking the logic of the primacy of resistance that forms the basic point of departure of a radically new way to read the question of both power and politics in such a way that the political is shown in its irreducibility to the paradigm of government and the logic of the state. While Foucault's fifth thesis is established as a way to fundamentally situate and designate the primacy of resistance as a permanent component of the field of power, it is my contention that this same thesis forms the basis from which an alternative economy of power relations and politics can be developed from inside the history of struggle and not with the

presupposition of the paradigm of government and the logic of sovereignty. As such, the importance of Foucault's work lies in the way in which he reveals an alternative principle of intelligibility for a new economy of power relations from which to understand the domain of the political consequent upon the permanence of resistance. Thus, in the "Subject and Power" when Foucault proclaims that "what we need is a new economy of power relations," we find that the advent of this "new economy of power relations" requires and is made possible by a critical investigation into the question of resistance, as well as the agonistic struggle between the exercise of government and the counter-force of resistance.⁸²³ For Foucault, then, a new economy of power relations:

Consists in taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point. To use another metaphor, it consists in using this resistance as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their position, find out their point of application and the methods used. Rather than analyzing power from the point of view of its internal rationality, it consists in analyzing power relations through the antagonism of strategies.⁸²⁴

Here, Foucault importantly confirms that the critical development of an alternative economy of power relations both depends on the critical question of resistance, as well as an analytic of power in terms of the "antagonism of strategies." Within the power/resistance dynamic, the question of politics for Foucault means that the very field of the political can be read in terms of an agonistic struggle: "the struggle is everywhere....at every moment, we move from rebellion to domination, from domination to rebellion, and it is all this perpetual agitation that I would like to bring out."⁸²⁵ It is in regard to this "perpetual agitation" that Foucault's analytic of power/resistance and its correspondence with the field of politics can be understood as marking a critical caesura between the logic of an *archē* and the domain of an *agōn* as a principle of intelligibility of power.

⁸²³ Michel Foucault, "Subject and Power," 328.

⁸²⁴ Ibid, 329.

⁸²⁵ Cited in: Alessandro Fontana and Mauro Bertani, "Situating the Lectures," in Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1975-1976*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003) 280.

Indeed, it is my contention that insofar as Foucault's fifth thesis posits that resistance is primary with power, then the theme of agonism arising from the dynamic power/resistance can be invoked as alternative basis from which to understand the historical domain of the political in a way that transcends the paradigms of the political as outlined in chapter one. Foucault writes, "[r]ather than speaking of an essential antagonism," as Schmitt does to describe the substance of the political based in the sovereign power of the state, "it would be better to speak of an agonism of a relationship that is at the same time mutual incitement and struggle; less a face to face confrontation that paralyzes both sides than a permanent provocation."⁸²⁶ Here, Foucault directly reveals a new dynamic from which to read the structure of the political in terms of a permanent field of "agonism" made possible by the permanent inscription of resistance amongst this dynamic. By invoking the term "agonism" instead of "antagonism," Foucault means to point toward the way in which power/resistance dynamic attested to in his fifth thesis is redefined as the space of an *agōn*, and thus that the domain of the political can be marked as the dynamic field of a continuous and "permanent provocation" between relations of power and forms of resistance.

In other words, rather than inquiring into the questions pertaining to power, politics and the political in terms of the historical *archē*, as is the case in both Aristotle and Schmitt, Foucault's fifth thesis instead determines that the very question of the political ought to be understood in terms of a permanent sphere of an *agōn* in which resistance is permanently inscribed into the dynamic to which relations of power consist and operate. To be sure, the theme of agonism as developed in regard to Foucault's fifth thesis reveals a fundamental point in his work in which the simultaneity between the art of governing and the art of not being governed can be substantiated. Thus, when Foucault invokes the term "agonism" as opposed to antagonism to critically distinguish his thought from his predecessors, this term is set to nominate how the very field of power as government is necessarily counter-posed with the dynamic of field of resistance as both the condition of possibility of power relations as such and the material manifestation of the domain of agonism inherent within power relations as such. Crucially, however, insofar as resistance is taken to be primary with power, the question

⁸²⁶ Michel Foucault, "Subject and Power," 342.

of politics—indeed of the political—cannot simply be reduced to the paradigm of government since it is the permanent potentiality of resistance that distinguishes the field of power from its traditional basis in the notion of sovereignty. The primacy of resistance means that the political emerges in the struggles created by movements of resistance—that is resistance, according to Foucault, designates the topology proper to the field of the political, since without the permanent potential of resistance, the question of politics could only be posed and conceptualized in terms of domination, obedience, and the repressive hypothesis of juridical, sovereign law.

Lest political theory wishes to remain within the conceptual terrain that can only conceive of the question of politics in terms of the state, sovereign power, and the history of governmentality, Foucault's fifth thesis maintains that such a task can only be accomplished in regard to the question of resistance—indeed, the primacy of resistance. It is because Foucault maintains that a critical analysis of power relations and the domain of the political must be understood on condition of resistance that he valorizes the place of resistance in his thought and maintains that the analysis of the “agonism between power relations and the intransitivity of freedom is an increasingly political task—even, the political task inherent in all social existence.”⁸²⁷ Insofar as Foucault elevates the “agonism” between relations of power and points of resistance as the “political task inherent in all social existence,” then the fifth thesis from *The History of Sexuality* can be understood as marking the very basis from which such a task can be accomplished. To be sure, Foucault's radical inscription of the permanent potential of resistance amongst power relations demonstrates how it is with the concept of resistance and not simply the paradigm of government that marks the principle of intelligibility from which power relations are exposed as a permanent field of agonism.

With the outline of the primacy of resistance acting as an analytic framework from which to rethink the paradigm of the political as a permanent co-extensive relation between power and resistance, the following chapter demonstrates a critical correspondence between the fifth thesis of *The History of Sexuality* and his strategic inversion of Clausewitz's proposition on politics and war from *Society Must Be Defended*. To be sure, Foucault's fifth thesis informs the very basis of this strategic

⁸²⁷ Ibid, 343.

reversal to the point where the structure of the political becomes indicative of a permanent struggle between power and resistance coded as a relation of civil war.

Whereas this chapter was set to broach the ways in which Foucault's analytic of power reveals and turns upon the rationale of the primacy of resistance, the following chapter traces how this thesis formulates a critical caesura in the logic that ground the question of politics within the first principle of an archē to the domain of a permanent agōn. More specifically, in the following chapter I contend that Foucault's preliminary problematic of resistance as sketched in the *History of Sexuality* is significantly reinvigorated and revised in *Society Must Be Defended* in such a way that the history of the political can be reread neither as a politics of an oikonomia nor as sovereignty, but rather as an agonistic politics of resistance as civil war.

Chapter 5

5 From Archē to Agōn

*If power is indeed the implementation and deployment of a relationship of force, rather than analyzing it in terms of surrender, contract, and alienation, or rather than analyzing it in functional terms as the reproduction of the relations of production, shouldn't we be analyzing it first and foremost in terms of conflict, confrontation, war? That would give us an alternative to the first hypothesis—which is that the mechanism of power is basically or essentially repression—or a second hypothesis: Power is war, the continuation of war by other means. At this point we can invert Clausewitz's proposition and say that politics is the continuation of war by other means.*⁸²⁸

--Michel Foucault

*The Modern State, which purports to put an end to civil war, is instead its continuation by other means.*⁸²⁹

--Tiqqun

In the previous chapter, I introduced and examined the primacy of resistance—via Foucault's fifth thesis on power from *The History of Sexuality*—not only in order to demonstrate the ways in which the notion of resistance is the key concept required for Foucault's analytics of power and governmentality, but also how the primacy of resistance offers a radically new perspective from which to read the structure and history of the political anarchically. A critical economy of power relations according to Foucault's fifth thesis can only be understood on condition of the permanent potentiality for resistance; hence, the field in which power consists is reformulated in terms of the power/resistance dynamic. At the same time, however, the concept of resistance within this dynamic can be seen as belonging to power in such a way that it cannot be reduced to the techniques of power itself. The permanent potentiality of resistance amongst the dynamic field in which relations of power operate designates resistance as the anarchist invariant in which power relations can become transformed into a fundamental struggle between the exercise of government and a struggle with those whom one governs. Consequently, however, this means that resistance—indeed the primacy of resistance—

⁸²⁸ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 15.

⁸²⁹ Tiqqun, *Introduction to Civil War*, 79.

forms the pivotal point in which power, politics, and the history of the political can neither be reduced to the advent of sovereignty nor the exercise of government; the political only assumes the form of an *archē* for Foucault “when stable mechanisms replace the *free play of antagonistic reactions*” (original emphasis).⁸³⁰ While we have seen how Foucault prefers the term “agonism” over that of “antagonism,” what is referred to as “free play of antagonistic reactions,” ultimately reveals an alternative paradigm for political thought and praxis, one that takes the form of an agonistic struggle between the exercise of power as government and the counter-historical movements of resistance.⁸³¹ What is at stake, then, in Foucault’s fifth thesis is not simply a redefinition of an economy of power relations indicative of the permanent presence of resistance, but that the permanent presence of resistance within the dynamic field of power offers key insight into rethinking the foundational tenets of orthodox political philosophy, as well as basic project of radical political theory. If we refuse, as Foucault suggests, the nexus that binds the question of politics to its foundation in sovereign power, and take the primacy of resistance as the critical grid from which to read the history of the political, it is my contention that the history of politics can no longer be understood in terms of a project in pursuit of a state, sovereignty or the exercise of government, but rather as a form of agonistic struggle, a certain sphere of praxis in which we can glimpse the basis of what I hold to be an anarchist hypothesis of the political.

In this regard, this chapter seeks to establish a theoretical continuity between the primacy of resistance broached in *The History of Sexuality* and the lecture series given under the provocative title *Society Must Be Defended* in which the power/resistance dynamic is directly reinvigorated by Foucault as the basic framework from which to read politics and the history of the political. More specifically, while the previous chapter was set to reveal and explicate how Foucault’s fifth thesis posits the primacy of resistance as the condition of possibility and principle of intelligibility for a new economy of power relations, this chapter traces how Foucault invokes this same thesis as the basis from which to rethink the history of the political as *agōn* in which the power/resistance dynamic is recast and coded in terms of interpreting politics as a continuation of war.

⁸³⁰ Michel Foucault, “Subject and Power,” 346-347.

⁸³¹ *Ibid.*, 342.

Provided that the lectures comprising the series *Society Must Be Defended* were given in the years between the publications of *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality*, the former not only coincides chronologically with the later text, but thematically as well, often expanding upon and further developing several of the key concepts made possible in his new analytic of power. Since the lectures composing *Society Must Be Defended* were given during the final stages of writing *The History of Sexuality*, the former, as Mark Kelly concludes, “constitutes something of a supplement to” the latter.⁸³² Yet, while it has been acknowledged that certain central themes explored in *The History of Sexuality* are further developed in *Society Must Be Defended*, the continuity between the two texts is most commonly reduced to the question of power while bracketing the coinciding question of resistance.⁸³³ In this regard, Stuart Elden has traced how the concept of “biopower” is the key concept developed in *Society Must Be Defended*.⁸³⁴ Elden’s reading of the importance of the study of “biopower” in *Society Must Be Defended* is further shared by Paolo Palladino⁸³⁵ and Michael Dillon,⁸³⁶ both of whom analyze these lectures as extended commentaries on the term as it he develops in *The History of Sexuality*. While these studies have helped outlined a specific continuity between these two texts in terms of power, it is my contention that *Society Must Be*

⁸³² Mark G. Kelly, *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, 35.

⁸³³ See: Stuart Elden, “Strategies for Waging Peace: Foucault as *Collaborateur*,” in *Foucault On Politics and War*, eds. Michael Dillon and Andrew Neal (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 32.

⁸³⁴ Ibid, 25. Here, although Elden maintains that the concept of “biopower” had been a previous concern for Foucault, he concludes that it is in *Society Must Be Defended* “that the concept is developed at some length.” Elden is correct to point toward the ways in which Foucault continues to develop the concept of “biopower” throughout these lectures. However, a close reading of these lectures reveals that Foucault’s focus is only partially dedicated to a theory of biopower. Indeed, while it is often the case that readers of Foucault often turn to the final chapter of *The History of Sexuality* in order to highlight the importance of the study of biopolitics to Foucault, a similar move is made in *Society Must Be Defended*, and critics such as Elden often valorize Foucault’s discussion of biopower in the final lecture at the expense of the others.

⁸³⁵ Paolo Palladino, “Revisiting Franco’s Death: Life and Death and Biopolitical Governmentality,” in *Foucault On Politics and War*, eds. Michael Dillon and Andrew Neal (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 115-116. Beginning with a short discussion of the question of biopower in *The History of Sexuality*, Palladino argues that it is in *Society Must Be Defended* that the “ominous connotations of this biological redefinition of political subjectivity are more fully articulated” (115).

⁸³⁶ Michael Dillon, “Security, Race, War,” in *Foucault On Politics and War*, eds. Michael Dillon and Andrew Neal (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 167-168. At stake for Dillon is how the notion of biopower in *Society Must Be Defended* introduces the themes of race and racism to Foucault’s study of power. Yet there is vital difference between the concept of “race” and what Foucault refers to in *Society Must Be Defended* as “race struggle” (65). While Foucault indeed understands that biopower necessitates a form of state racism, the histories he traces in terms of “race struggles” can be distinguished from the former notion insofar as the theme of race is analyzed in terms of resistance rather than power.

Defended more directly extends the discussion of the question of resistance proposed in *The History of Sexuality* to the study of politics and political theory.

With this in mind, I argue that insofar as a vital connection between the analytic of power posed in *The History of Sexuality* and the analytic of the political as extensively theorized in *Society Must Be Defended* can be made in terms of the primacy of resistance rather than biopower, that this theoretical nexus is itself made possible in Foucault's strategic inversion of Carl Von Clausewitz's proposition regarding the ways in which war designates the continuation of politics by other means.⁸³⁷ Thus, within the same chapter from *The History of Sexuality* containing the theses on power, Foucault infamously inverts Clausewitz's proposition in order to begin to retheorize the political consequent upon the agonistic dynamic of power/resistance. Insofar as the field of power relations designates the strategic struggle between power and resistance, it is in this regard that Foucault asks the following critical question: "[s]hould we turn the expression around, then, and say that politics is war pursued by other means?"⁸³⁸ Although Foucault's strategic inversion of Clausewitz marks a significant turning point in *The History of Sexuality*, especially in terms of the relation between power/resistance dynamic and the domain of the political, the question pertaining to whether or not politics can be thought in terms of struggle, war, and resistance is what informs the eleven lectures composing *Society Must Be Defended*, and it is necessary to turn to this text in order to demonstrate how Foucault's analytic of power/resistance directly informs his theory of politics.

By tracing the ways in which Foucault's fifth thesis is recast in *Society Must Be Defended*, it is my contention in this chapter that his assertion regarding how resistance is

⁸³⁷ See: Carl Von Clausewitz, *On War*, trans. Michael Howard and Peter Paret (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1984). Clausewitz was a Prussian military theorist whose principle unfinished and continuously revised text, *On War* (posthumously published in 1832) is considered a standard text pertaining to the philosophy of war. At stake in Clausewitz's text is a certain synthesis between war and politics, whereby war is understood as a means to achieve a specific political goal. The passage Foucault has in mind when he reverses one of the more famous maxims from *On War* read as follows: "war is not an act of policy but a true political instrument, a continuation of political intercourse, carried on with other means" (87). By invoking this maxim, Foucault's goal is to fundamentally reverse the relation Clausewitz establishes between war and politics. Rather than, understanding war in terms of a continuation of politics in order to achieve a certain goal, Foucault understands war as the very substance of politics—that is, war designates the key paradigm of the political.

⁸³⁸ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 93.

primary and absolutely co-extensive with the field of power is indicative of an alternative hypothesis from which to interpret the political as *agōn* rather than *archē*. At the same time, however, while it is my claim that Foucault's thought fundamentally turns upon carving out a critical transition from the political as *archē* to the political as *agōn*, I further argue that the agonistic theory of struggle which underpins his political work additionally transcends the recent neo-Schmittian attempts to understand the political in terms of what political theorist Chantal Mouffe refers to as "agonistics."⁸³⁹ Although in a series of texts organized in an attempt to reinvigorate the basic tenets of Schmitt's theory of the political within the context of a "liberal, pluralist, democracy," Mouffe maintains an agonistic conception of the political, her thought fundamentally relies upon the Aristotelian and Schmittian models of political as outlined in chapter one.⁸⁴⁰ Thus, while Mouffe retains a fundamental dimension of agonism as the substance and principle of intelligibility of the political, her model of the political simply reframes Schmitt's argument that the state designates the conceptual horizon proper to the antagonistic dimension of the political, while simultaneously reducing the question of "agonistic politics" to the Aristotelian paradigm of government in which politics is that which seeks "to establish order and organize human co-existence."⁸⁴¹ To be sure, despite her

⁸³⁹ While some of Mouffe's ideas pertaining to an agonistic theory of the political were first rehearsed in the text co-written with Ernesto Laclau, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy: Towards a Radical Democratic Politics* (London: Verso, 1985), the term "agonistics" is the central concern of her three texts organized in regard to rethinking Schmittian political theory within a democratic framework. See: Chantal Mouffe, *The Return of the Political* (London: Verso, 1993); Chantal Mouffe, *On the Political* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 20-1, 23, 52; and Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics* (London: Verso, 2013), 5-19.

⁸⁴⁰ Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics*, 19. A return to Foucault's theory of the political fundamentally turns upon a critique of how Mouffe's model of the political simply recasts the dual paradigms of government and sovereignty as *agōn*. Thus, in the first chapter from *Agonistics*, Mouffe maintains an elemental distinction between politics and the political that reinvigorates the Aristotelian and Schmittian paradigms outlined in chapter one. In its most basic form, Mouffe retains the Schmittian logic of an ever-present dimension of antagonism inherent to the political and suggests that an agonistic politics as such can be reduced to a theory of democratic sovereignty (2-3). Even more problematically, however, is the way in which Mouffe seeks to institutionalize the agonistic dimension of the political within the Aristotelian model of politics as the exercise of government, wherein what is referred to as "agonistic politics" in fact designates the "ensemble of practices, discourses, and institutions that seek to establish order and organize co-existence" (3). At stake in her model of the political then, is precisely the eradication of a concept of *agōn* as struggle. Despite her attempts at developing a radical theory of politics through an agonistic conception of the political, there is effectively nothing "radical" at stake in her political theory. Against, Mouffe's reduction of *agōn* to framework of representative and institutional democracy, it is my contention that Foucault's theory of the political as *agōn* finds its consistency within an anarchist, rather than democratic theoretical framework.

⁸⁴¹ *Ibid*, 3.

intentions at theorizing a contemporary form of “radical politics,” Mouffe’s work is set to “institutionalize” the agonistic dimension of the political within the framework of both government and sovereignty—that is, Mouffe eradicates the field of struggle from the theory of agonism in order to arrive at an “agonism without antagonism,” or an agōn without the permanence of resistance.⁸⁴² As we will see, an agonistic conception of the political according to Foucault, can only be maintained on the permanent possibility of resistance and not its exclusion; to expel or eradicate resistance from the field of the political is to remove the condition by which power relations can be transformed into an agonistic struggle. Against Mouffe’s theory of agonism, this chapter is therefore devoted to a critical exploration of an alternative agonistic conception of insurrectionary politics central to both Foucault’s project in *Society Must Be Defended* and anarchist politics. My central claim is that an agonistic conception of the political is characterized neither by the antagonism inherent in the sovereign friend/enemy antithesis (Schmitt) nor by a hegemonic struggle over power (Mouffe), but rather by the struggle with, or resistance to, power exercised as government.

Contrary, then, to the ways in which Mouffe’s theory of agonistic politics reduces the political as agōn to the exercise of government within a sovereign state, it is my contention in this chapter that a return to an agonistic theory of the political is better elaborated through a Foucauldian framework, in which the political as agōn retains the logic of a permanent struggle internal to the power/resistance dynamic outlined in the previous chapter. The challenge central to this chapter is to develop an agonistic conception of the political which allows us to more critically reflect on the questions pertaining to resistance and anarchist thought today. In this regard, this chapter traces how Foucault’s fifth thesis acts as the basis from which the history of the political is recast in *Society Must Be Defended* as the history of agonistic struggle in order to ultimately explore the implications of an anarchist hypothesis of the political as agōn in three interrelated ways that carve out a distinct intervention in the history of political theory. After addressing some of the critical commentary and challenges surrounding *Society Must Be Defended*, the first section explicates how Foucault’s genealogical method ultimately reveals that the history of politics and the political can in be

⁸⁴² Ibid, 10.

reinterpreted in terms of a history of struggle. At stake here is to demonstrate how genealogy posits an alternative basis and approach to the question of politics in such a way that the political cannot be simply reduced to the history of the state. Rather than beginning with the question of sovereignty as the precondition of modern politics, Foucault proposes to replace the “contract-oppression” paradigm of juridico-sovereignty with the war model of the political, “in which the pertinent opposition is not, as in the previous schema, that between the legitimate and the illegitimate, but that between submission and struggle.”⁸⁴³ As we will see, it is on condition of historical discourses of struggle and resistance, and not that of the state, that gives politics its distinctive character as a continuation of war for Foucault.

Utilizing Foucault’s strategic reversal of Clausewitz as the pivotal turning point from which the fifth thesis is recast as the basis of the political, in the following section, I outline how Foucault’s war model of the political reveals an agonistic conception of politics historically expressed in movements of resistance. Here, I trace the ways in which the interpretation of politics as a continuation of war reveals an alternative hypothesis from which politics and the history of the political emerge in the permanent struggle, or agonistic conflict between power and resistance. Yet, as we will see, insofar as the domain proper to the history of the political is *agōn*, what is ultimately at stake for Foucault is that resistance is therefore primary with the history of politics as such. My claim here is that just as resistance is primary with power for Foucault, the agonistic model of the political asserts that resistance is also primary with the history of politics. In the final section, I explore the ways in which Foucault’s thesis that politics can be interpreted as a continuation of war is invoked as a theoretical and historical counter-narrative to the origin of sovereign power and the birth of the state as extensively outlined by Hobbes in his seminal political treatise the *Leviathan*. While in Hobbes the condition of possibility of sovereign power and the modern state coincides with the eradication of the condition of war from the field of the political, in Foucault’s reading of the history of politics it is the permanence of civil war that allows for the emergence of politics. As the expression that captures the field of struggle between forces within an agonistic conception of the political, civil war at once designates, for Foucault, the

⁸⁴³ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 15.

condition of possibility and principle of intelligibility in which the history of politics and the political can be understood as a paradigm of resistance. Taking the outline of the primacy of resistance developed throughout the previous chapter as a way to demonstrate how Foucault's analytic of power itself turns upon a permanent and continuous struggle between relations of power and forms of resistances, what is required here is to further elaborate how the fifth thesis on power is reinvigorated in *Society Must Be Defended* in a way that reveals an agonistic theory of the political in terms of a unique paradigm of resistance that Foucault refers to as "social warfare."⁸⁴⁴ My claim here is that civil war designates the key paradigm from which the history of the political can be interpreted agonistically on condition of the primacy of resistance. More specifically, my argument is that if we refuse the dual paradigms of government and sovereignty as the a priori foundation of both politics and the political, and take civil war as the alternative expression in which the history of politics is expressed in terms of a politics as resistance, then *Society Must Be Defended* reveals an agonistic model of the political that can only be described as anarchistic.

5.1 Critical Reception of *Society Must Be Defended* and the War Model of the Political

Society Must Be Defended designates one of Foucault's most detailed inquiry into the questions pertaining to the history of political theory, and his analysis regarding the ways in which the history of the political can be reread in terms of the strategic model of force relations, struggle, and war has at once been considered "one of the major achievements of Foucault's thought,"⁸⁴⁵ as well as a critical "turning point"⁸⁴⁶ in his research at this time. As Julien Reid suggests, "the problem of war" in Foucault "is the problem of political modernity par excellence."⁸⁴⁷ To be sure, the various themes and problematics

⁸⁴⁴ Ibid, 60.

⁸⁴⁵ Arnold Davidson, introduction to Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), xviii.

⁸⁴⁶ Alessandro Fontana and Mauro Bertani, "Situating the Lectures", in Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), 273.

⁸⁴⁷ Julien Reid, "Life Struggles: War, Discipline and Biopolitics in the Thought of Michel Foucault," in *Foucault On Politics and War*, eds. Michael Dillon and Andrew Neal (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 65.

tackled by Foucault in *Society Must Be Defended* have inspired volumes of work dedicated to elaborating the importance of the concept of war in the whole of his work and thought.⁸⁴⁸ Because the lectures were given only a few months before *The History of Sexuality*, the two texts are often read together as support for Foucault's attempt at a non-sovereign analytic of power and politics. Thus, in his commentary on *Society Must Be Defended*, Arnold Davidson argues that "Foucault shows us one way to detach ourselves from the philosophico-juridical discourses of sovereignty and the law that has so dominated our thought and political analysis."⁸⁴⁹ At the same time, however, *Society Must Be Defended* is often misunderstood as a model of power and politics that Foucault ultimately abandons in favor of the study of governmentality in the years to follow. Thus, in *Foucault, Governmentality, Critique* Thomas Lemke views *Society Must Be Defended* as the beginning point from which Foucault begins to revise his genealogy of power in regard to the question of government rather than a politics of war.⁸⁵⁰ Similarly, while Kelly does not maintain, as does Lemke, that the concept of governmentality designates a distinct break with the war model of power and politics, he nevertheless suggests that Foucault disavows the "metaphor of war."⁸⁵¹ While it is true that around 1978 Foucault ceases (although not completely) to use the language of war, he never abandons this agonistic conception of power and politics, and it is my contention that this model allows us to see how Foucault centralizes the question of resistance to his theory of politics and the political.

Although the lectures comprising this text have been recognized as a crucial turning point in Foucault's political thought, rereading the history of the political through the paradigm of war and struggle, like the concept of resistance, has been met with much negative critical reception. On one side of the critical spectrum, philosopher Jürgen Habermas criticizes Foucault's understanding of power relations in *Society Must Be*

⁸⁴⁸ See: *Foucault On Politics and War*, eds. Michael Dillon and Andrew Neal (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008); and *Foucault in an Age of Terror: Essays on Biopolitics and the Defense of Society*, eds. Stephen Morton and Stephen Bygrave (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

⁸⁴⁹ Arnold Davidson, introduction to *Society Must Be Defended*, xvii.

⁸⁵⁰ Thomas Lemke, *Foucault, Governmentality, Critique* (Boulder: Paradigm Publishers, 2012), 2-12.

⁸⁵¹ Mark Kelly, *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, 57. In Kelly's analysis of the war analytic of power and politics, Foucault begins rethink power as war in terms of a critical conception of power as a "game." "The metaphor," Kelly writes, that largely "displaces that of war is that of the *game*" (58).

Defended for reducing the field of power to the “interaction of warring parties,”⁸⁵² thus neglecting other possible models. Similarly, Charles Taylor criticizes Foucault’s strategic reversal of Clausewitz’s proposition on war and politics in order to claim that the theory of the political posited in *Society Must Be Defended* undermines all the political achievements that rest on the foundations Foucault ultimately hopes to overturn.⁸⁵³ More seriously, however, is the way in which both Habermas⁸⁵⁴ and Taylor⁸⁵⁵ claim that Foucault’s thought in *Society Must Be Defended* fundamentally relies upon an unacknowledged Schmittian framework, and thus that there is a sort of theoretical alliance between Foucault and Schmitt’s respective theories of the political. This position is again shared by Axel Honneth, who argues that Foucault’s refusal to presuppose a normative base for his theory of the political ultimately leads to an “unacknowledged political decisionism” in the sense of Schmitt.⁸⁵⁶ In her text *Critique of Violence* Beatrice Hansen has extensively outlined the ostensive connections between Foucault and Schmitt. Hansen takes *Society Must Be Defended* as the critical turning point from which Foucault’s theory of politics can be assessed, and maintains that “Foucault’s theory of the warring subject risk[s] coming remarkably close to Schmitt’s *The Concept of the Political* or even his later, postwar *Theory of the Partisan*.”⁸⁵⁷ Indeed, although Hansen acknowledges Foucault’s attempt to rethink politics in terms of an agonistic struggle, she concludes that Foucault fails in the end to theorize a certain reciprocity between power and resistance, instead “favoring more often than not a one-

⁸⁵² Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity: Twelve Lectures* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 255.

⁸⁵³ Charles Taylor, “Foucault on Freedom and Truth,” in *Foucault: A Critical Reader*, ed. David Couzens Hoy (Cambridge: Blackwell, 1994), 69-102.

⁸⁵⁴ See: Neil Levy, “History as Struggle: Foucault’s Genealogy of Genealogy,” in *History of the Human Sciences*, 11:4 (1998), 376. Here Levy outlines Habermas’ accusations of a hidden Schmittian framework in Foucault’s thought, and further maintains that what “concerns Habermas about Foucault’s conception of power is the possibility of politics as civil war.”

⁸⁵⁵ For a discussion of Taylor’s accusations see: Beatrice Hansen, *Critique of Violence: Between Poststructuralism and Critical Theory* (New York: Routledge, 2000), 145-146. Following Taylors critique, Hansen maintains that insofar as Foucault’s “project might seem to have more in common with Schmitt’s conservative critique of liberalism, thus seemingly confirming the unholy alliance between left- and right-wing thinkers, one of whose main points of convergence has been antiliberalism” (145).

⁸⁵⁶ Axel Honneth, *Critique of Power: Reflective Stages in a Critical Social Theory*, trans Kenneth Baynes (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1993), 162.

⁸⁵⁷ Beatrice Hansen, *Critique of Violence*, 145-146.

sided sedimentation of force, inflicted upon subjects from the top down.”⁸⁵⁸ It is in this regard that Hansen maintains that the “very status of the homology power/war lack[s] clarity.”⁸⁵⁹

At stake in these critiques of *Society Must Be Defended* is that while Foucault attempts to rethink the history of the political in terms of struggle, this very form of political historicism simply recasts the fundamental antagonism inherent in Schmitt’s model. Yet, while Foucault does indeed invoke the concept of struggle as the principle from which to read the history of the political, the form agonism assumes within the history of politics for Foucault can be fundamentally differentiated from Schmitt’s antagonistic model of the political. Whereas Schmitt’s thought turns upon, as we have seen in chapter one, reducing the dimension of antagonism proper to the political as a paradigm of sovereignty, in Foucault the dimension of antagonism that gives the history of the political its defining character as such arises and is historically manifest in a struggle, or war against the state and the exercise of government. In other words, while both Schmitt and Foucault theorize the political as agōn, it is my contention in this chapter that the latter’s thought is to be critically distinguished from the former in that the antagonistic dimension of the political is theorized by Foucault as a paradigm of resistance and not that of state sovereign power.⁸⁶⁰

Although Foucault has been criticized for the alleged similarities between his work in *Society Must Be Defended* and Schmitt’s theory of the political, others have sought to offer more critical readings of Foucault’s theory of politics, while further outlining the ways in which these lectures designate an extended discussion of the general problematic of resistance as set forth in *The History of Sexuality*. Neil Levy praises Foucault’s work in *Society Must Be Defended* for outlining an alternative theory

⁸⁵⁸ Ibid, 98.

⁸⁵⁹ Ibid, 137.

⁸⁶⁰ Indeed, while Habermas, Taylor, and Hansen all attempt to read Foucault’s work within a Schmittian framework, these theorists neglect to notice that within the narrative arc of *Society Must Be Defended* Foucault traces how the antagonistic dimension of politics as a paradigm of civil war is itself colonized by and becomes the discourse of the state in the Schmittian sense. Thus, although Schmitt is never cited in *Society Must Be Defended*, Foucault’s work accounts for a historical distinction between two ways in which an agonistic theory of the political has historically been elaborated—that is, as both paradigm of resistance and paradigm of the state.

of the political “in which history became the site and stake of political struggle.”⁸⁶¹ Indeed, Levy further maintains that “it is one of the virtues of [*Society Must Be Defended*] that its detailed descriptions of strategies employed...in the struggle over history provide an extended illustration of one of the ways in which Foucault envisages resistance as functioning.”⁸⁶² It is in this regard that *Society Must Be Defended* can be read in terms of offering a distinct account of how the power/resistance dynamic is exemplified historically. Furthermore, other theorists such as Andrew Neal have traced the ways in which Foucault’s lectures are concerned with a series of historical discourses of resistance linked together through the general theme of “politics as war.”⁸⁶³ Accordingly, Neal maintains that what is at stake for Foucault in *Society Must Be Defended* is to demonstrate how the historical discourses of politics as war provide a “resistant understanding of the principles of modern politics and the modern sovereign state.”⁸⁶⁴ While Foucault’s critical inquiry into the how the resistant discourses of politics as war itself resists the orthodox, standard narratives of political theory, others have suggested how in *Society Must Be Defended* Foucault attempts to rethink the political as agōn in which the discourses of politics as war reveal an alternative theory of historical struggle that cannot be reduced to the paradigm of “class struggle.” Thus, while Hansen maintains a close approximation between Schmitt and Foucault, she nevertheless suggests that the latter rejects an “*antagonistic* conception of social struggle, including Marx’s forceful class struggle, to unlock another *agonistic* playing field, one no longer tethered exclusively to the historical category of economic redistribution” (original emphasis).⁸⁶⁵ Tracing the question of war through both Foucault and Deleuze, Reid claims that what is ultimately at stake in their respective theories is the shared “insistence upon war as the condition of possibility for the expression of resistance against the state and its allied regimes of power.”⁸⁶⁶ Although it is widely recognized that Foucault’s

⁸⁶¹ Neil Levy, “History as Struggle: Foucault’s Genealogy of Genealogy”, 159.

⁸⁶² Ibid, 167.

⁸⁶³ Andrew W. Neal, “Goodbye War on Terror? Foucault and Butler on Discourses of Law, War and Exceptionalism,” in *Foucault On Politics and War*, eds. Michael Dillon and Andrew Neal (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 52.

⁸⁶⁴ Ibid, 52.

⁸⁶⁵ Beatrice Hansen, *Critique of Violence*, 101.

⁸⁶⁶ Julien Reid, “Life Struggles,” 81.

theory of politics—with its emphasis on the questions of war and struggle—designates a key turning point for Foucault, the significance of this unique model of the political and a corresponding form of politics as resistance has yet to be fully explored or appreciated in its anarchic and agonistic specificity.

While each of these theorists have highlighted the relation between the concept of war and the question of politics, while further exploring the implications of this war model of the political to the question of resistance in Foucault, it is my contention that the specific correspondence Foucault develops between the power/resistance dynamic and the war model of the political signifies a distinct way in which the political can be interpreted anarchically—that is, as *agōn*, a unique theory in which politics emerges not as a paradigm of sovereign power, but instead as resistance. To be sure, it is my contention that Foucault’s strategic inversion of Clausewitz, wherein the term “politics” comes to be coded as a paradigm of war, designates an alternative principle in which the history of the political can be read from the perspective and logic of the primacy of resistance. As we will see, Foucault’s agonistic model of the political in *Society Must Be Defended* at once designates an alternative theory of politics that transcends the Schmittian and neo-Schmittian models, as well as an alternative paradigm of historical resistance that transcends the Marxist model of class struggle. While the following chapter will outline how a specific continuity between Foucault’s historical model of political struggle as posed in *Society Must Be Defended* and his later work on ethics through the concept of resistance, what is first required in this chapter is to demonstrate how the primacy of resistance is recast by Foucault as a key paradigm of politics, and further how this paradigm ultimately reveals an agonistic theory of the political that turns upon the primacy of resistance. This is why in *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault describes his work as informing a critical transition from “the model based on law” to the “strategic model” of war, in which the question of politics is reopened through the power/resistance dynamic.⁸⁶⁷ While the power/resistance dynamic marks the cusp from which an alternative analytic of power can be based, this same co-extensive relation between power and resistance demonstrates for Foucault that the domain of the political can be analogously analyzed in terms of a permanent struggle—that is on the basis that

⁸⁶⁷ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 102.

resistance is primary with power. In other words, by inverting Clausewitz's proposition, Foucault reveals how the dynamic field of force relations constituting the power/resistance nexus directly corresponds with the domain of the political, and thus that the question of politics is marked by a similar dynamic. Crucially then, whereas the primacy of resistance marks the conceptual nexus from which Foucault's analytic of power is made possible, it is my contention that this thesis reappears in *Society Must Be Defended* in such a way that carves out a critical caesura between the political as *archē* and the political as *agōn*, a caesura in which the domain of the political and the history of politics coincides with the agonism inherent within the power/resistance dynamic.

5.2 Genealogy as an Analytic of Historical Struggle and Discourses of Resistance

*And so we have the outline of what might be called a genealogy... We have both a meticulous rediscovery of struggles and the raw memory of fights... we can give the name "genealogy" to this coupling together of scholarly erudition and local memories which allows us to constitute a historical knowledge of struggle and to make use of that knowledge in contemporary tactics.*⁸⁶⁸
--Michel Foucault

In the opening lecture of *Society Must Be Defended* Foucault begins by tracing the ways in which the general thematics, points of focus, and methodologies in both philosophy and critical theory have, over the past two decades prior to his own work, changed in regard to what he refers to as the "efficacy of dispersed and discontinuous offensives."⁸⁶⁹ To be sure, Foucault views his own work in *Society Must Be Defended* as continuing within this critical tradition, and the inaugural lecture in this series is set to reveal a specific continuity between these critical movements and his own unique methodology. Consistent with his other texts and lectures, the question of method is crucial for Foucault, and the first lecture is set to situate his work within the methodological framework of these "discontinuous offensives" in terms of what he refers to—via

⁸⁶⁸ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 8.

⁸⁶⁹ Ibid, 5. By the "efficacy of dispersed and discontinuous offensives," Foucault makes reference to several of the critical and philosophical contemporary to his own time including the antipsychiatry movement, Reich and Marcuse's critiques of traditional forms of morality and sexual hierarchy, and the anarchist attacks on the penal and judicial systems.

Nietzsche—as “genealogy.”⁸⁷⁰ As outlined here, Foucault’s genealogical method is itself characterized by three distinct features that form the basic theoretical framework from which the critical inquiry into the history of the political comprising the remaining lectures is made possible. It is important to briefly trace what Foucault employs in this text as his genealogical method in order to point toward the ways in which the power/resistance dynamic is recast as the implicit conceptual framework that makes possible an alternative reading of the political as a history of agonistic struggle between power and resistance. While it has been noted that Foucault views his work in *Society Must Be Defended* as taking part in an ongoing struggle over a critical interpretation of history,⁸⁷¹ and further that this alternative interpretation of history ultimately turns upon a historical critique of sovereignty,⁸⁷² it is my contention that the outline of genealogy in the opening lecture is set to both frame the interpretation of history and critique of sovereignty as an extended discussion of primacy of resistance. Indeed, genealogy is the methodology proper to understanding history as a history of struggle—that is, genealogy is the method of analysis that renders the history of politics as resistance discernible for Foucault.

First at stake in Foucault’s genealogical method is a return to the concept of “critique” as extensively outlined in chapter three. Indeed, in relation to the critical turns in philosophy contemporaneous to his own time, Foucault maintains that this return to the general ethos of critique is characterized by the “immense and proliferating criticizability

⁸⁷⁰ Foucault first begins to use the term “genealogy” in his 1971 essay, “Nietzsche, Genealogy, History,” in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984), 76-100. Here, Foucault writes that the key characteristic of genealogy “is that it opposes itself to the search for origins” (77). In contrast to the search for “origins” as the principle task of historical analysis, Foucault maintains that history is not produced in a unitary or linear fashion, but is instead “always produced through a particular stage of forces” (83). In order to account for an analysis of “forces” as the substance of history, Foucault proposes an alternative analytic of that takes “insurmountable conflict” as its basic point of inquiry (83). As a critical methodology “genealogy,” Foucault writes, on the one hand “seeks to re-establish the various systems of subjection” in which the analysis of history “must delineate this interaction, the struggle these forces wage against each other or against adverse circumstances” (83-84). What is ultimately at stake for Foucault is that genealogy designates the methodology by which history can be reinterpreted as a history of struggle, and as early as 1971 we can begin to glimpse the beginnings of Foucault’s agonistic theory of the political in which an “insurmountable conflict” between power and resistance, between power exercised as government and the art of not being governed, designates the substance of politics.

⁸⁷¹ Neil Levy, “History as Struggle: Foucault’s Genealogy of Genealogy,” 166.

⁸⁷² Andrew W. Neal, “Goodbye War on Terror? Foucault and Butler on Discourses of Law, War and Exceptionalism,” 375.

of things, institutions, practices, and discourses.”⁸⁷³ This “immense and proliferating” return of the critical attitude is what Foucault poses in terms of the “local character of critique,” and is to be distinguished from the “tyranny of overall discourses, with their hierarchies and all the privileges enjoyed by theoretical vanguards.”⁸⁷⁴ At stake here is how the “local character of critique” distinct to genealogy reveals the “inhibiting effect specific” to the “all-encompassing,” or “totalizing approaches” exemplified in the dominant disciplines of Marxism and psychoanalysis.⁸⁷⁵ Indeed, Foucault’s own critical approach is set as a way to contest and replace the theoretical and political vanguardism of psychoanalytic and Marxist thought with an “autonomous and noncentralized” realm of genealogical critique.⁸⁷⁶ It is in the critical transition from the universal and totalizing theories to the local forms of critique, that Foucault begins to present an alternative way to interpret the history of the political from a critical perspective that begins in the analysis of local forms of resistance opposed to a universal theory of class struggle. Indeed, while we have seen how with the concept of critique Foucault begins to broach an anarchist hypothesis of the political in terms of an ongoing struggle between the exercise of power as government and the “art of not being governed,” Foucault reaffirms this connection here and maintains that the local character of critique by which the genealogical method is to be distinguished, develops (albeit “distantly”) in relation to the “anarchist thematic” of struggle.⁸⁷⁷ Distinct from an all-encompassing, universal theory, what Foucault posits here as the “anarchist thematic” of critique is itself made possible in the analysis of discourses of resistance—that is, the “anarchist thematic” of critique is that which begins with and is elaborated through an analysis of historical struggle manifest in what Foucault refers to in terms of “insurrections of subjugated knowledges.”⁸⁷⁸ Crucially, it is by analyzing these forms of resistance and “insurrections of subjugated knowledges” that Foucault begins to rethink politics and the history of the political agonistically.

⁸⁷³ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 6.

⁸⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 6; 8.

⁸⁷⁵ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁸⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁸⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 5.

⁸⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 7.

With these “insurrections of subjugated knowledges” Foucault further outlines two interrelated ideas through which the question of resistance emerges as the basis from which genealogy proceeds. First, by “subjugated knowledges,” Foucault makes reference to the “historical contents that have been buried or masked in functional coherences or formal systematizations.”⁸⁷⁹ At stake here for Foucault is how the formal systems of universal theories such as Marxism effectively homogenize the interpretation of history in a way that fundamentally excludes the “historical contents” animated in varying forms of struggle and resistant knowledge. In this way, the “historical contents” revealed through genealogical analysis are what “allow us to see,” according to Foucault, “the dividing lines in the confrontations and struggles that functional arrangements or systematic organizations are designed to mask.”⁸⁸⁰ In other words, the genealogical method is established by Foucault as a way to both reveal and account for the various forms of historical struggle, as well as a critique of how certain forms of struggle and conflict are effectively hidden in other critical approaches. Understood in this way, “genealogy,” according to Foucault, is “a sort of attempt to desubjugate historical knowledges, to set them free, or in other words to enable them to oppose and struggle against the coercion of a unitary, formal, and scientific theoretical discourse.”⁸⁸¹ Furthermore, by “subjugated knowledges” Foucault refers to a “whole series of knowledges that have been disqualified as nonconceptual knowledges, as insufficiently elaborated knowledges.”⁸⁸² With reference to Deleuze, Foucault refers to these “disqualified” forms of knowledge as “minor,” and further maintains that the project of genealogy is to “reactivate” these minoritarian forms of knowledge “against the scientific hierarchicalization of knowledge and its intrinsic power-effects.”⁸⁸³ It is in this way,

⁸⁷⁹ Ibid, 7.

⁸⁸⁰ Ibid, 7.

⁸⁸¹ Ibid, 10.

⁸⁸² Ibid, 7.

⁸⁸³ Ibid, 10. The concepts of “minor,” “minority,” and “minoritarian” were first outlined by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in *Kafka: For a Minor Literature*, trans. Réda Bensmaïa (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), and further outlined and elaborated in their collaborative text *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1988).

Foucault concludes, that these “returns of knowledge” are what make “critique possible.”⁸⁸⁴

What Foucault refers to in this lecture as “insurrections of subjugated knowledges” offers a unique way to from which to reread history on condition of the question of resistance; rather than presupposing sovereign power and the state as the site of political and philosophical problems, Foucault instead suggests that if a critical interpretation of history is possible then one must begin with an analysis pertaining to the forms of resistance to the exercise of power. In other words, genealogy constitutes an alternative critical framework from which to consider to the question of politics on condition of resistance. Indeed, as Foucault suggests, “we can give the name genealogy to this coupling together of scholarly erudition and local memories, which allows us to constitute a historical knowledge of struggles, and to make use of that knowledge in contemporary tactics.”⁸⁸⁵ Here, Foucault posits a certain continuity between genealogy and the history of struggle as revealed in the analysis of “subjugated knowledges,” as well as how this type of analysis encourages and is paired with a certain type of praxis. Indeed, as Levy comments, Foucault views his work in *Society Must Be Defended* as a way to “engage in political struggle by way of an interpretation of history as struggle.”⁸⁸⁶ At stake, then, in what Foucault refers to as the “insurrection of subjugated knowledges” is at once how these discourses reappear as *discourses of resistance*, as well as how these insurrectionary subjugated knowledges are what make possible the critical analysis of history as struggle in such a way that philosophy itself begins to intervene and partake in this very struggle.

While the reappearance of these insurrectionary discourses of resistance, paired with the local, minoritarian character of critique, are what form the theoretical framework of the genealogical method, what is ultimately at stake for Foucault is how these discourses of resistance reveal the history of politics in radically novel ways that the genealogical method must be able to take into account. To be sure, it is in relation to the historical inquiry into forms of struggle and discourses of resistance in which the

⁸⁸⁴ Ibid, 6.

⁸⁸⁵ Ibid, 8.

⁸⁸⁶ Neil Levy, “History as Struggle: Foucault’s Genealogy of Genealogy,” 169.

genealogical method is invoked by Foucault in *Society Must Be Defended* in order to reinterpret the history of the political and politics on condition of both the “anarchist thematic” of critique, as well as the insurrectionary discourses of resistance. Thus, “what is at stake in both cases,” Foucault maintains, is a “historical knowledge of struggle.”⁸⁸⁷ This is to say that “genealogy” according to Foucault, at once takes a critical inquiry into a “historical knowledge of struggle” as the basic locus from which its form of critique becomes possible. To be sure, Foucault draws a specific continuity between the insurrectionary discourses of resistance and what he refers to in terms of a critical “memory of combats” in which genealogy comes to designate the “meticulous rediscovery of struggles and the raw memory of fights.”⁸⁸⁸ Indeed, with the anarchist thematic of critique paired with insurrectionary discourses of resistance—indeed, a historical “memory of combats,” the genealogical method finds its locution and is elaborated within a reinterpretation of history as paradigm of struggle. As we will see, what Foucault refers to as “genealogy” not only turns upon an agonistic conception of the history of the political in which politics emerges as a paradigm of resistance, but also a critical theory of these movements and discourses of resistance as such. Indeed, it is because Foucault rereads the history of the political agonistically that *Society Must Be Defended* carves out a distinctly vital intervention within the history of political theory.

While all of Foucault’s works have severe implications for the tradition of political theory, *Society Must Be Defended* designates Foucault’s most concentrated and sustained effort to explore his genealogical analytic of power and resistance in relation to the questions of politics and traditional political theory. Similar to one of the main goals of *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault’s primary concern in *Society Must Be Defended* is to juxtapose the ways in which power is traditionally represented in political theory with an alternative reading of how relations of power function historically—which is to say, agonistically, for Foucault.⁸⁸⁹ While the genealogical method turns upon an analysis of

⁸⁸⁷ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 8.

⁸⁸⁸ *Ibid.*, 8.

⁸⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, 23–40. Here, Foucault traces how his work in the past several years preceding these lectures has been oriented toward “studying the ‘how of power’”—that is the ways in which relations of power are exercised (24). As in *The History of Sexuality*, Foucault here opposes his own study of power to the general problematic of sovereignty, and outlines several “precautions” from which his understanding of power proceeds (26–34). Yet, Foucault’s study of power in *Society Must Be Defended* is to be

the discourses of resistance in order to reinterpret history as a history of struggle, it is my contention that there is a specific continuity between the analysis of these discourses of resistance and Foucault's attempt to rethink the possibility of power and politics "outside the model of the Leviathan, outside the field delineated by juridical sovereignty and the institution of the State."⁸⁹⁰ Indeed, it is within the context of the "insurrections of subjugated knowledges," or discourses of resistance that Foucault proposes a reversal of Clausewitz in order to suggest that, rather than being expelled from the field of the political, the continuation of war is what gives the political its agonistic form of permanent struggle as such. In this regard, Foucault's primary focus throughout these lectures is to elaborate a critical analytic of power and politics in terms of the model of war, a model that at once designates the historical operability of power relations, as well as the principle of intelligibility from which to reread the history of the political in terms of an agonistic model of war. In order to rethink the history of the political against the model of the Leviathan, Foucault maintains that it is by analyzing the history of insurrectionary discourses of resistance, or "subjugated knowledges," that allows for an inversion of Clausewitz, and ultimately that politics can be interpreted in terms of a continuation of war. Similar, then, to the way in which *The History of Sexuality* is framed in terms of rethinking power relations on condition of the primacy of resistance, in *Society Must Be Defended* Foucault frames his critical inquiry into the war analytic of power and politics in terms of unmasking an alternative theory of historical resistance, and thus an anarchic theory of the political as agōn.

5.3 Politics as the Continuation of War

*War is waged throughout history, and through the history that tells the history of war. And history, for its part, can never do anything more than interpret the war it is waging or that is being waged through it.*⁸⁹¹

--Michel Foucault

distinguished from his other works in that its question is directly situated in opposition to Hobbes's treatise the *Leviathan*. Thus, Foucault maintains that his work has been set to accomplish the "opposite of what Hobbes was trying to do in *Leviathan*" (28).

⁸⁹⁰ Ibid, 34.

⁸⁹¹ Ibid, 173.

In the epigraph above, Foucault posits a specific nexus between war and the interpretation of history; war, as Foucault suggests here, at once designates the substance that gives history its form as such, as well as the principle of intelligibility from which history can be interpreted as itself a continuation of war. While Foucault's genealogical analytic of history as the history of struggle is what makes possible his critical inquiry into the history of the political as such, the remaining lectures ought to be understood as an attempt to employ this analytic in the study of politics. To be sure, Foucault's inversion of Clausewitz designates the guiding theme by which the lectures in *Society Must Be Defended* are organized as an alternative account of how the history of politics and the political can be posed in reference to a historical knowledge of struggles manifest within the paradigm of war. Insofar as the "insurrections of subjugated knowledges" fundamentally turn upon and reveal a "historical knowledge of struggle," it is in this way that the general theme of *Society Must Be Defended* recasts the power/resistance dynamic as the basis of the political. Indeed, as Neal observes the central theme established by Foucault in *Society Must Be Defended* is his concern "with a series of marginal historical discourses that are linked through the theme of politics as the continuation of war."⁸⁹² In this regard, there is a specific continuity between an analysis of insurrections of subjugated knowledges and the interpretation of politics as a continuation of war; that is, although the discourses of resistance Foucault traces throughout this text are irreducible to one another, what unifies these otherwise heterogeneous movements is a model of the political that takes war as the very basis of politics. In its most preliminary form, then, we might take the interpretation of politics as a continuation of war as at once being informed by an analysis of discourse and movements of resistance, as well as how this type of analysis itself resists the standard narrative of orthodox political theory.

It is my contention that the continuity Foucault's establishes between history, war, and politics designates a critical caesura between the political as *archē* and the political as *agōn*. Rather than analyzing power and politics "in terms of surrender, contract, and alienation," as in Hobbes, Foucault therefore asks "shouldn't we be analyzing it first and foremost in terms of conflict, confrontation and war?"⁸⁹³ To do so, Foucault concludes,

⁸⁹² Andrew W. Neal, "Goodbye War on Terror?", 52.

⁸⁹³ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 15.

“would give us an alternative to the first hypothesis—which is that the mechanism of power is basically or essentially repression,” or that politics can be reduced to the genesis and exercise of sovereignty.⁸⁹⁴ In opposition to the repressive hypothesis of power (referred to in this text as “Reich’s hypothesis”), Foucault proposes “Nietzsche’s hypothesis,” and maintains that politics and the political can be analyzed in terms of “a warlike clash between forces.”⁸⁹⁵ It is in regard to this second hypothesis that Foucault takes as the basic model, or conceptual framework, from which Clausewitz’s initial proposition can be inverted as the basic principle from which to reread the history of the political as a genealogical history of struggle between forces—that is as *agōn*. In relation to this agonistic conception of politics and the political, what is ultimately at stake in *Society Must Be Defended* is how Foucault’s analysis of “subjugated knowledges” and insurrectionary discourses are what make possible a counter-historical theory of the political in which the question of politics is reframed by Foucault on condition of the discourses and politics of resistance manifest in the continuation of war.

Although Foucault has been criticized for conflating the condition of war with the exercise of politics, Foucault’s goal in *Society Must Be Defended* is, more fundamentally, to provide a critical inquiry into whether the paradigm of war can be understood as at once constituting the principle of intelligibility of politics, as well as how the history of the political as such can be interpreted agonistically—that is, in terms of an ongoing and permanent struggle between force and counter-force, between power and resistance.⁸⁹⁶ With this problematic in mind, in the third lecture Foucault suggests a preliminary set of three propositions derived from the thesis “politics is the continuation of war by other

⁸⁹⁴ Ibid, 15.

⁸⁹⁵ Ibid, 16. While Foucault’s attempt at a non-sovereign and non-economic analytic of power relations and politics, necessarily requires an alternative critical framework, or hypothesis in order to pose the question of politics in a radically new manner, his goal is not, however, to simply overturn the previous models of power but, more fundamentally, to demonstrate a continuity between these two theories of power. It is in this way that Foucault claims that the “two hypotheses are not irreconcilable,” and further that there “seems to be a fairly logical connection between the two” insofar as “repression is the political outcome of war, just as oppression was, in the classical theory of political right, the result of the abuse of sovereignty” (16).

⁸⁹⁶ See: Beatrice Hansen, *Critique of Violence*, 27. Although Hansen criticizes the way in which Foucault reduces politics to the paradigm of war, Foucault seems to anticipate this critique, and suggests in *Society Must Be De* that his goal is not to “confuse power relations with relations of war” (46). Rather than reducing power and politics to war, Foucault responds that he is “simply taking an extreme [case] to the extent that war can be regarded as the point of maximum tension, or as force-relations laid bare” (46).

means.” First, Foucault maintains that what can be referred to in terms of “politics” derives its specific political character as such from the inegalitarian and asymmetric relations of force manifest in the paradigm of war. “Politics,” Foucault therefore writes, designates the field which “sanctions and reproduces the disequilibrium of forces manifested in war.”⁸⁹⁷ Here, Foucault draws an explicit continuity between power, politics, and war in such a way that the latter designates the key paradigm in which both power relations and politics are traditionally represented and historically manifest; hence, politics according to Foucault is historically expressed and coded as the continuation of war. While the characteristic specific to “politics” is itself derived and manifest in the paradigm of war, this additionally means for Foucault that the history of the political as written “within this civil peace, these political struggles, these clashes over or with power, these modifications of relations of force” can all be interpreted as a continuation of the political paradigm of war.⁸⁹⁸

Indeed, in *Society Must Be Defended* Foucault discards the orthodox narrative of modern political theory that begins with the state and the advent of sovereign power as the substance of politics in favor of an agonistic conception of history and politics that locates war as the key paradigm of the political. While modern political theory since Hobbes⁸⁹⁹ and Locke⁹⁰⁰ relies upon the eradication of war from the field of the political, Foucault instead replies that interpreting politics as the continuation of war means “we are always writing the history of the same war, even when we are writing the history of

⁸⁹⁷ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 16.

⁸⁹⁸ *Ibid*, 16.

⁸⁹⁹ A significant portion of the *Leviathan* is dedicated to exploring the “state of nature” Hobbes characterizes and defines in terms of a social condition of war (See chapter 13, “Of the Natural Condition of Mankind as Concerning their Felicity and Misery,” (75-86). According to Hobbes, it is this “state of nature” that is overcome by the establishment of the sovereign commonwealth, wherein the question of “politics” as such begins by overcoming the state of war (117). In other words, the eradication of the condition of war by sovereign power is the precondition in Hobbes’s thought for the emergence of politics and the political.

⁹⁰⁰ See: John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government*, ed. Thomas Peardon (New York: The Bobbs-Merrill Company, 1952). Quite similar to the position Hobbes takes in *Leviathan*, in his text *The Second Treatise of Government*, Locke draws an explicit connection between a “state of nature” and a “state of war” (See: chapter two, “Of the State of Nature,” (4-11); chapter three “Of the State of War,” (11-14). In a manner quite similar to Hobbes, Locke further distinguishes what he refers to as “political power” from the natural condition of war, and traces how the former is born by expelling war from the field of the political. Thus in Locke’s thought we find that “where there is an authority, a power on earth from which relief can be had by appeal, there the continuance of the state of war is excluded” (14).

peace and its institutions.”⁹⁰¹ Despite, then, the orthodox narratives of politics in which the condition of war (agōn) is replaced with the political as archē, Foucault maintains that the very history which purports to put an end to the condition of war is instead its continuation. While Foucault’s inversion of Clausewitz is set in order to rethink the question of politics on condition of the struggle/war paradigm, this means that the history of the political is not to be found in the advent of state sovereignty; instead what defines the history of the political and gives it its historicity as such is the continuation of politics as war. Finally, Foucault claims that interpreting the history of the political in terms of the paradigm of war “means that the last battle would put an end to politics,” and effectively “suspend the exercise of power as continuous warfare.”⁹⁰² In other words, the permanence of the political for Foucault is attested to by the permanence of war, without which the question of politics would lose its specificity.

In each of these propositions, what is ultimately at stake in interpreting politics as a continuation of war is how the political is manifest and historically expressed as an agonistic domain of continuous struggle, conflict, confrontation, and ultimately resistance. The history of the political and the emergence of politics does not begin with the advent of sovereignty according to Foucault, but in the paradigmatic condition of war—that is, war designates the domain proper to the history of the political; in other words, politics as a continuation of war turns upon an agonistic, rather than archic, conception of the political. Thus, according to Foucault “[i]f we make history, the history of the wars that go on throughout history,” then it is the “history/war relationship,” and not the political as archē that forms the “precondition for the emergence of politics.”⁹⁰³ As the condition required for the emergence of “politics,” war, like resistance for Foucault, designates a position of primacy with respect to the questions of politics and the political—that is, “politics” is made possible and is historically elaborated in what Foucault refers to as “the primacy afforded to war.”⁹⁰⁴ While in *The History of Sexuality* Foucault asserts that resistance is primary with power, in *Society Must Be Defended* he reveals that what underlies the question of politics and gives it its

⁹⁰¹ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 16.

⁹⁰² Ibid, 16.

⁹⁰³ Ibid, 174.

⁹⁰⁴ Ibid, 155.

character as such is a “sort of primitive and permanent war.”⁹⁰⁵ By “primitive” war Foucault’s choice in terminology is not set to allude to the condition of war that defines the “state of nature” in the writings of Hobbes and Locke; instead, by “primitive” Foucault on the one hand refers to the way in which the paradigm of war is, more fundamentally, what underlies the orthodox narrative of the history of the political as told from the perspective of the state and the advent of sovereignty. Thus, while Honneth suggests that it is on this point that Foucault’s thought is “reminiscent of Hobbes,”⁹⁰⁶ the term “primitive” in Foucault’s thought more fundamentally means that “beneath peace, order, wealth, and authority, beneath the calm order of subordinations, beneath the State and State apparatuses, beneath the laws”—that is, beneath the history of political power as *archē*—is the permanence of war.⁹⁰⁷ It is in this way, and not of invoking a “state of nature” prior to the state, that Foucault asks the critical question pertaining to whether or not the “phenomenon of war” can be “regarded as primary with respect to other relations.”⁹⁰⁸ Furthermore, in its reproduction of the permanent struggle between forces, politics as war can be understood as exemplifying and continuing the power/resistance dynamic outlined in *The History of Sexuality*. Indeed, by reading the historical expression of politics as a continuation of war, Foucault not only reveals the problematic of sovereignty and political power in a radically new way that turns upon the paradigm of war, but also how the paradigm of war—as a history of agonistic struggle—itself turns upon and is made possible in posing the question of politics alongside the permanent possibility of resistance.

By refusing to subordinate the condition of war to the birth of modern politics, Foucault reveals an alternative hypothesis of the political that takes as its basis the continuation of war, and it is in this way politics can be understood as assuming the form of an *agōn*. Insofar as war is a “permanent,” and therefore primary, component of politics this means that for Foucault war—as the historical expression of politics—at once designates the general principle of intelligibility from which to interpret both the history of the state and sovereign power, as well as the counter-history of resistance.

⁹⁰⁵ Ibid, 47.

⁹⁰⁶ Axel Honneth, *Critique of Power*, 157.

⁹⁰⁷ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 46-47.

⁹⁰⁸ Ibid, 47.

Politics as the continuation of war is therefore established, on the one hand, by Foucault in order to demonstrate how the standard interpretation of the political as found in the advent of sovereignty, in the history of the state, and the exercise of power as government can in fact be reread as a continuation of the political paradigm of war. At the same time, however, because war designates the historical expression of the political, “politics as the continuation of war by other means” is also, and more fundamentally, invoked by Foucault not only to account for the place of resistance amongst the dynamic of politics as war, but also in terms of how resistance designates the vital component from which the question of politics can be understood agonistically. Similar to Foucault’s assertion regarding how the question of power is to be necessarily paired with the question of resistance, interpreting politics as the continuation of war means that the history of the state and of sovereignty are to be posed alongside the correlative problematic of “rebellion.”⁹⁰⁹ This affirmation that the substance of politics arises between the state and the counter-history of rebellion echoes Foucault’s insistence that “where there is power, there is resistance.” Whereas the dynamic field of force relations that characterize power relations is, according to Foucault, to be understood as a permanent struggle between power and resistance, this idea is again recast in terms of what he first refers to as the “invasion-rebellion system.”⁹¹⁰

With the power/resistance dynamic designating the basis from which politics can be interpreted as a continuation of war, what Foucault refers to in this text as the “invasion-rebellion system” reveals an alternative basis from which to think through the question of politics agonistically. “[I]nvasion and rebellion” Foucault therefore writes “were the two main elements that were introduced to rediscover the war that goes on within societies.”⁹¹¹ As we will see, although Foucault prefers the term “government” above that of “invasion” in order to distinguish historical conquest from its continuation

⁹⁰⁹ Ibid, 108-111.

⁹¹⁰ Ibid, 160. Foucault’s “invasion-rebellion” distinction recalls a similar distinction made by the anarchist Benjamin Tucker. As cited in chapter two, Tucker writes: “the distinction between invasion and resistance, between government and defense is vital. Without it there can be no valid philosophy of politics” (“The Individual, Society, and the State,” 22). In *Society Must Be Defended*, Foucault appears to follow this core logic, and much of the text explores the possibility of a philosophy of politics based in an agonistic struggle between government and resistance. Like Tucker, then, Foucault asserts that the question of politics can only be understood in the distinction between power and resistance.

⁹¹¹ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 160.

as an exercise of government, what is crucial is that resistance and the history of “rebellion” designate a permanent component of the interpretation of politics as a continuation of war. While resistance, as a condition of possibility of power, in Foucault’s thought is at once primary with respect to field of force relations, as well as that which designates the permanent potential to transform a power relation into an agonistic struggle between forces, by reading the political as a historical continuation of war, Foucault’s work in *Society Must Be Defended* is set to invoke this same dynamic as the constituent component of politics. Indeed, the term “politics”—as both political paradigm and historical continuation—does not simply refer to the history of the state, but more fundamentally toward the struggle between the state and the history of rebellion. As Neal observes, insofar as politics can be interpreted as a continuation of war, this means that politics as war can either be “deployed in the nationalist myths of historical defeat of victory” (invasion)—that is, in terms of the politics of the state, “or inverted into discourses of class war, race war, religious war” (rebellion).⁹¹² Interpreting politics as a continuation of war, thus subverts the sovereign/political nexus, and reframes the very question of politics in terms of an agonistic struggle between the history of the state and the counter-history of resistance.

Foucault’s inversion of Clausewitz ultimately turns upon the elaboration of politics within the historical discourses of war and resistance in which the political as such assumes the agonistic form of power/resistance. By invoking the paradigm of war as both the principle of intelligibility of the political, as well as the defining characteristic of politics as such, Foucault reveals how an agonistic theory of the political turns upon a struggle between the exercise of sovereign government and movements of resistance. In other words, the war paradigm of politics is an agonistic model of the political in which resistance nominates the key component through which the politics assumes the form of permanent sphere of struggle between adversarial forces. Consequently, however, insofar as politics is to be understood as the continuation of war, this reveals what Foucault refers to in terms of a “historical paradox” in which politics as the continuous exercise of warfare is at once the object of the state, as well as the movements of

⁹¹² Andrew W. Neal, “Goodbye War on Terror?”, 56.

resistance against the state.⁹¹³ As an object of the state, Foucault first traces how, alongside the development of the state from the Middle Ages to the modern era, the discourses and practices of war underwent a distinct change characterized by the ways in which “only State powers could wage wars and manipulate the instruments of war.”⁹¹⁴ Indeed, Foucault argues that the historical expression of politics as war predates its colonization by the state, and thus traces how “the State acquired a monopoly on war.”⁹¹⁵ By outlining how the state gradually obtained a monopolization on the discourses of war, Foucault’s point is to first demonstrate how what he refers to as the practice of “day-to-day warfare” was increasingly “eradicated from the social body.”⁹¹⁶ Rather than defining the state as Max Weber does in terms of the monopolization of legitimate violence, Foucault shifts the focus toward the question of politics as war, and demonstrates that what defines the state and makes possible its existence as such is, contra Hobbes, its colonization and eventual monopolization of the political paradigm of war.⁹¹⁷ By locating the existence of a condition of war prior to the advent of sovereignty, Foucault appears to affirm the condition of war that characterizes the “state of nature” as described by Hobbes and Locke. Yet, while Foucault does indeed retain the notion of a social condition of “day-to-day warfare” prior to the state, what is at stake for Foucault is not to suggest a condition or essence of war that must necessarily be overcome in contractual sovereignty, but rather that another form of “politics”—indeed, a politics as resistance expressed in the continuation of war—predates the politics of the state. In other words, the history of politics neither begins with the eradication of war from the field of the political nor the advent of sovereign power; instead, rather, the advent and continuation of sovereign power is only an episode in the continuation of politics as war.

At the same time, however, while the state increasingly acquired a monopolization on the discourses and practices of war, Foucault’s penultimate claim in *Society Must Be Defended* is to suggest that alongside and parallel to the state’s monopolization of war is the appearance of heterogeneous, critical discourse of resistance

⁹¹³ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 48.

⁹¹⁴ Ibid, 48.

⁹¹⁵ Ibid, 48.

⁹¹⁶ Ibid, 48.

⁹¹⁷ See: Max Weber, “Politics as Vocation,” 78. In the often cited passage from this influential text, Weber defines the state as that which “claims a *monopoly of the legitimate use of physical force*” (original italics).

that radically denied and opposed the state's eradication of war as a permanent social relation. This oppositional discourse of resistance is what Foucault refers to as the "first historico-political discourse on society."⁹¹⁸ Distinct from the philosophico-juridical discourses" of sovereignty, Foucault is clear that these "historico-political" discourses of resistance are exemplary of what he refers to as "subjugated knowledges."⁹¹⁹ It is in regard to these "historico-political" discourses of resistance that Foucault begins to posit an agonistic theory of the political in a novel form. In tracing the advent of these resistant discourses, what is first at stake for Foucault is how the discourse opposed to the state is "also a discourse on war," wherein the reappearance of the general paradigm of war was "understood to be a permanent social relationship, the ineradicable basis of all relations and institutions of power."⁹²⁰ In "historico-political" discourse, then, the concept of politics as war takes on an entirely different meaning than in that of the state. As Reid suggests, insofar as the examples Foucault invokes in *Society Must Be Defended* refer to the "increasingly autonomous, decentralized, and anarchistic character" of political struggles, then what is at stake in the "historico-political" discourses on society is "not so much the wars of the state as wars against the state."⁹²¹ Here, the critical question of war, as revealed in these "historico-political" discourses, at once designates a permanent social condition, as well as that which is inscribed into and makes possible political power—that is, the concept of warfare within historico-political discourse describes both the exercise of sovereignty and a position a position of resistance, a praxis against the state. Indeed, Foucault's thesis that politics designates the continuation of war is set to capture the struggle between these opposing critical positions. Consequently, however, this means that Foucault's work in *Society Must Be Defended* reveals a vital way in which the question of politics and the history of the political can be understood not as archē, but as agōn, as a field in which the permanence of resistance represents the condition by which politics assumes the war/struggle model.

Further at stake for Foucault is how these discourses of resistance fundamentally disrupt the standard, orthodox narrative of political theory. Against Hobbes's theory that

⁹¹⁸ Ibid, 49.

⁹¹⁹ Ibid, 49.

⁹²⁰ Ibid, 49.

⁹²¹ Julian Reid, "Life Struggles," 80.

posits the advent of sovereign power through the eradication of the condition of war from the field of the political, Foucault maintains that the key characteristic common amongst these “historico-political” discourses of resistance begins with the claim that “political power does not begin when the war ends”—that is, political power is none other than the continuation of politics as war.⁹²² While the politics of war is revealed by these “historico-political” discourses of resistance as basic motor behind political power and its exercise, Foucault additionally demonstrates how these critical discourses fundamentally give rise to, and turn upon, a distinct form of politics as resistance. “Historico-political discourse is not, and cannot be,” Foucault argues “that of the Prince’s politics or, obviously, that of absolute power.”⁹²³ Instead “historico-political discourse,” as Foucault maintains, is a “discourse that cuts off the king’s head, or which at least does without a sovereign and denounces him.”⁹²⁴ As a critical discourse that decapitates the theory and practice of sovereignty, Foucault’s inquiry into the “historico-political” discourses should be understood as exemplary of his oft cited attempt to behead the sovereign in political theory. Taking the Levellers as an early historical example of the appearance of this critical discourse of resistance, Foucault maintains that the historico-political discourse on war is therefore a “discourse of a struggle against the king.”⁹²⁵ As a distinct form of politics irreducible to the sovereign politics of the state, these “historico-political” discourses of politics as war and resistance are genuinely anarchic in both its struggle against and without a king—which is to say without *archē*. Finally, insofar the “historico-political” discourses on war posits and turns upon the elaboration of a distinct understanding of the political in which politics cannot be reduced to the exercise of state sovereignty, these discourses reveal what Foucault refers to as a “counter-historical function” made possible in the concept and practice of politics as resistance.⁹²⁶ As that which designates the appearance of an alternative history parallel, yet counter to the history of the state, the “historico-political” discourses of resistance are what reveal for Foucault the very possibility of an alternative history of the political as *agōn*.

⁹²² Ibid, 50.

⁹²³ Ibid, 59.

⁹²⁴ Ibid, 59.

⁹²⁵ Ibid, 59.

⁹²⁶ Ibid, 66.

Interpreting politics as the continuation of war unmasks a counter-narrative that resists the standard, orthodox history of political theory. Rather than presupposing the eradication of the condition of war from the domain of the political, Foucault takes the paradigm of war as the constituent component of both politics and the political. The war analytic of politics as such is irreducible to the political as *archē*—that is, politics as the continuation of war is therefore an agonistic model of the political. As *agōn*, the history of the political for Foucault is manifest and defined by a permanent struggle between forces. More specifically, the term “politics”—as the historical continuation of war manifest in the “invasion-rebellion system”—designates for Foucault a permanent struggle between the politics of the state and the politics of resistance. “The State,” Foucault therefore maintains “is nothing more than the way that the war between the two groups in question continues to be waged in apparently peaceful forms.”⁹²⁷ While the state according to Foucault exists only as the continuation of war waged through peace, rethinking the political in terms of an *agōn* ultimately turns upon conceptualizing the political on condition of the permanent possibility of resistance and rebellion. In this way, having established an alternative reading of the political, Foucault importantly maintains “how an analysis of this type is obviously articulated with revolutionary hopes, an urgent call for rebellion, and also a politics of rebellion or revolution.”⁹²⁸ Here, Foucault reveals that what is at stake in the elaboration of an agonistic conception of the political is the question of resistance—indeed a form of politics as resistance. To be sure, the thesis “politics is the continuation of war by other means” is made possible according to Foucault not simply by the permanent possibility of resistance within the field of the political, but the elaboration of a certain praxis, a certain notion of politics as resistance.

It is with these two ideas—that is, that the permanent presence of resistance within the field of the political reveals a counter-historical narrative to orthodox history of the state and sovereign power, and further that this counter-history is elaborated in terms of conceiving politics as resistance—that *Society Must Be Defended* reinvigorates the power/resistance dynamic through interpreting politics as a continuation of war. While resistance is primary amongst the dynamic field of power relations both in terms of

⁹²⁷ Ibid, 88.

⁹²⁸ Ibid, 88.

the condition of possibility of power relations as such, as well as the permanent potentiality to transform a power relation into a relation of struggle, Foucault reworks this dynamic into his understanding of politics in order to demonstrate how parallel to the history of the state, of sovereign power, of the exercise of government, is the counter-history of the state's own impossibility manifest in the politics of resistance. Foucault's rereading of the history of the political as the continuation of war, has been affirmed by the French collective, Tiquun, whose text *Introduction to Civil War* attempts to rethink the history of the political from the perspective of resistance expressed in the paradigm of what they refer to as "civil war." In a manner akin to Foucault's writing, Tiquun writes that interpreting politics from the perspective of civil war means on the one hand that "the modern State, which purports to put an end to civil war, is instead its continuation by other means."⁹²⁹ Yet, because of this, Tiquun further maintains that the "history of the modern State is the history of the struggle against its own impossibility... We have, then, the official history of the modern State... And also there is a counter-history, which is the history of its impossibility."⁹³⁰ It is this "counter-history," in which politics emerges in the war against the possibility of the state, that directs Foucault's general focus in *Society Must Be Defended*. As a consequence, however, what is ultimately at stake for Foucault is that the history of politics as such can no longer be reduced to the history of the state. As a continuation of war, politics according to Foucault takes place within an agonistic dynamic, a fundamental struggle or relation of war between the history of the state and the counter-history of resistance.

Interpreting politics agonistically—as a continuation of war—therefore means that the historical possibility of the state, of sovereignty, and of government is simultaneously the counter-history of resistance, or that which makes the state impossible. At the same time, however, the war model of the political not only posits the historical necessity of interpreting the politics as the continuation of struggle between forces, but also an alternative way from which to understand the historical question of politics on condition of resistance. In relation to the interpretation of war as a paradigm of resistance, both Pierre Clastres' ethnographic research into stateless societies, as well

⁹²⁹ Tiquun, *Introduction to Civil War*, 78.

⁹³⁰ *Ibid*, 116-117.

as Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the "war-machine" add further leverage to Foucault's argument.⁹³¹ In Clastres' text *Societies Against the State* (a text Foucault surprisingly neglects to reference) the concept of "war" is understood historically as a mechanism of resistance to the formation of the state.⁹³² Indeed, in Clastres' work, the concept and practice of war designates an alternative perspective from which history can be reinterpreted as an agonistic struggle between the state and the non-state. For Clastres, then, insofar as it is said that the "history of peoples who have a history is the history of class struggle," one could equally posit "with at least as much truthfulness, that the history of peoples without history is the history of their struggle against the state."⁹³³ Yet, this alternative interpretation of history as the ongoing struggle with the state additionally turns upon the elaboration of an alternative form of politics as resistance. With explicit reference *Societies Against the State*, Deleuze and Guattari affirm Clastres' understanding of war as a form of resistance with their concept of the "war-machine." Insofar as the paradigm of war can be understood as a political form of resistance, Deleuze and Guattari reverse the logic of Hobbes and maintain that since "the state was against war, so war is against the state and is what makes it impossible."⁹³⁴ As a form of resistance, Deleuze and Guattari argue that the "war-machine" cannot be defined, as is the case for Hobbes and Locke, in terms of a "state of nature," but instead as a "mode of a social state that wards off and prevents the state."⁹³⁵ Thus while the orthodox tradition of political theory takes the concept, condition, and practice of war as the inverse of the modern politics, in Foucault, Tiqqun, Clastres, and Deleuze and Guattari, the concept of war not only designates an alternative grid or principle of intelligibility from which to understand the history of politics agonistically, but also an alternative paradigm of politics found in the movements of resistance and rebellion.

⁹³¹ On the concept of the "war machine" see: Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, particularly plateau twelve "1227: Treatise on Nomadology—The War Machine," (351-423) and plateau thirteen "7000 B.C.: Apparatus of Capture," (425-473).

⁹³² Pierre Clastres, *Society Against the State: The Leader as Servant and the Humane Uses of Power Among the Indians of the Americas*, *Society Against the State*, Trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Zone Books, 1974). 159-186. Also see: Pierre Clastres, *Archaeology of Violence*, trans. Jeanine Herman (California: Semiotext(e), 1994), 139-200.

⁹³³ Pierre Clastres, *Society Against the State*, 185-186.

⁹³⁴ Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 357.

⁹³⁵ *Ibid*, 357.

Foucault's inversion of Clausewitz ultimately turns upon the elaboration of politics within the historical discourses of war in which the political as such assumes the form of an agōn as opposed to archē. More specifically, Foucault's primary focus throughout *Society Must Be Defended* is at once a detailed account of how the history of the political refers not simply to the history of the state, but instead to the permanent struggle between the state and the counter-history of its own impossibility, and furthermore that this interpretation of politics ultimately turns upon the analysis and elaboration of a politics of resistance as the key component that gives the political its form as such. *Society Must Be Defended* therefore turns upon an agonistic conception of the political. Crucially, however, while Schmitt's agonistic conception of the political, as well as Mouffe's more recent attempt to recast Schmitt's theory within a contemporary framework, effectively reduces the condition of agōn to that of archic sovereignty, in Foucault's thought the notion of an agōn attested to in the paradigm of war is retained in an altogether different manner. With the paradigm of war designating the materiality and principle of intelligibility of politics, the political as agōn cannot simply be reduced, according to Foucault, to the politics of the state; instead, rather, an agonistic theory of politics coded in the form of a permanent war ultimately turns upon a struggle between the state and the movements of resistance against the state. To be sure, although in *Agonistics* Mouffe maintains that a permanent "dimension of antagonism" is what defines the nature of the political, her agonistic model of politics fundamentally turns upon the eradication of resistance from the field of agonism as such.⁹³⁶ This eradication of resistance from the field of the political is what Mouffe refers to as an "agonism without antagonism"⁹³⁷ whereby a "radical disobedience that puts the state at bay" is to be

⁹³⁶ Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics*, 2.

⁹³⁷ Ibid, 10. In addition to the explicit Schmittian framework underlying this text, Mouffe's agonistic theory of the political as found throughout *Agonistics*, relies upon a fundamental distinction between *agonism* defined as a "struggle between adversaries" and *antagonism* taken to refer to a "struggle between enemies" (7). Here, Mouffe appears to draw upon a similar distinction between agonism and antagonism as established in Alain Pottage's essay "Power as an Art of Contingency: Luhmann, Deleuze, Foucault," in *Economy and Society*, 27: 1 (1998): 1-27. Pottage writes that "agōn" from the Greek agonisma refers to a "combative contest—a fight which is also a game—rather than antagonism, which etymologically refers to struggle" (22). Yet, while Mouffe's thought turns upon the distinction between agonism and antagonism, her notion of agonism attempts to retain the element of struggle Pottage's definition excludes. Indeed, according to Mouffe agonism can be distinguished from antagonism not in terms of theory of "contest" versus a theory of "struggle," but in terms of key distinction between

replaced or overcome by an “engagement with institutions.”⁹³⁸ In contrast to Mouffe’s theory of the political, Foucault’s conceptualization of politics as the continuation of war offers an alternative theory through which the agonistic dimension of the political is retained on condition of the primacy of resistance and the paradigm of war. Similar, then, to the way in which resistance, as we saw in the previous chapter, designates the condition of possibility in which a power relation can be transformed into a relation of struggle, resistance as manifest in the paradigm of war is what transforms the political as *archē* into the political as *agōn*.

5.4 Against Leviathan: Civil War as a Paradigm of Resistance

*The people have in a sense never ceased to denounce property as pillage, laws as extractions, and governments as domination. The proof is that they have never stopped rebelling...rebellion is nothing but the obverse of war. Laws, power, government, are the obverse of the war they are waging against us. Rebellion is therefore not the destruction of a peaceful system of laws for some reason. Rebellion is a response to a war that the government never stops waging. Government means their war against us, rebellion is our war against them.*⁹³⁹
--Michel Foucault

By interpreting politics as the continuation of war by other means, Foucault reveals how an agonistic conception of the political is made possible by the permanent presence of resistance within the field of politics as such. As a domain of *agōn*, the historical expression of politics as war cannot be reduced, according to Foucault, to the histories of government, sovereignty, and the state; instead, “politics” designates the domain of a

“adversaries” and “enemies.” In her earlier text *On the Political*, Mouffe discusses this distinction with reference to the friend/enemy antithesis established in Schmitt’s theory of the political, and maintains that “[w]hile antagonism is a we/they relation in which the two sides are enemies who do not share any common ground, agonism is a we/they relation where the conflicting parties, although acknowledging that there is no rational solution to their conflict, nevertheless recognize the legitimacy of their opponents” (20). Yet, while Mouffe reserves the term “*agōn*” to describe the struggle between adversaries rather than enemies, her agonistic model of the political turns upon a struggle between those who share a common political ideology. According to Mouffe, then, this means that although adversaries are engaged in struggle and “conflict, they see themselves as belonging to the same political association, as sharing a common symbolic space within which the conflict takes place” (20). In this way, Mouffe’s agonistic theory of the political fundamentally situates the notion of struggle between adversaries within the logic of the state.

⁹³⁸ Ibid, 70.

⁹³⁹ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 108.

permanent dynamic of struggle between the history of the state and the counter-history of resistance, a permanent war between government and movements of rebellion. In chapter three, we have seen how with the concept of “critique” Foucault maintains that the political questions pertaining to the exercise of government and its history is to be simultaneously posed alongside the counter-history of the “art of not being governed.” Furthermore, in chapter four, we have seen how the primacy of resistance as found in the fifth thesis on power from *The History of Sexuality* means, as Foucault writes that “[o]ne cannot, therefore, write either the history of kings or the history of peoples.”⁹⁴⁰ On condition of the permanence of resistance, Foucault therefore maintains that “one can write the history of what constitutes those opposing terms”—that is, the history of the permanent struggle “between the people and those who govern.”⁹⁴¹ In *Society Must Be Defended*, Foucault reaffirms these critical positions and subsequently posits that the political designates the historical struggle between the paradigm of government on the one hand, and the paradigm of resistance on the other. As Levy confirms, the “affirmation that in the relation between king and people, power is never fully concentrated on one side, echoes Foucault’s insistence that where there is power there is resistance.”⁹⁴² Crucially, it is in this way that Foucault’s reversal of Clausewitz can be understood as recasting the primacy of resistance as the basic principle from which to read the history of politics and the political. This is to say that the war model of the political, in which politics is historically manifest in terms of a continuation of war, not only finds its consistency within the power/resistance dynamic, but also on condition of the primacy of resistance.

With the history of struggle between the exercise of power as government and the counter-movements of resistance designating the field proper to the domain of the political, it is my contention that *Society Must Be Defended* at once invokes the power/resistance dynamic as the principle intelligibility of the political, as well as the historical manifestation of politics as such. In other words, there is a specific continuity between Foucault’s conception of power and politics, whereby the power/resistance

⁹⁴⁰ Ibid, 168.

⁹⁴¹ Ibid, 168.

⁹⁴² Neil Levy, “History as Struggle: Foucault’s Genealogy of Genealogy,” 167.

dynamic is reframed in terms of the politics/war model of the history of political struggle. Indeed, Foucault's fifth thesis, "where there is power, there is resistance"—means that politics and the history of the political can be interpreted in terms of the continuation of warfare. Yet, as a consequence to the war analytic of politics and the political, Foucault not only reveals how resistance is primary with respect to the history of the political—its historical manifestation continuously transforming the field of politics into an agonistic struggle between those who govern and those who resist—but, more fundamentally, how resistance is the key term that reveals the political in its agonistic form as such. Foucault therefore posits that resistance designates the principle of intelligibility from which the historical emergence of "politics" can be observed in its specificity—that is, the permanence of resistance designates the political in its most paradigmatic form. "The proof," that resistance designates a constituent component of the political as *agōn* arises, according to Foucault in the epigraph above with the fact that the "people have in a sense never ceased to denounce property as pillage, laws as extractions, and governments as domination...they have never stopped rebelling"—that is, rebellion must be understood as a permanent component of the field of the political.⁹⁴³ Thus, while we have seen how the war model of politics and the political ultimately finds its basis in the power/resistance dynamic, Foucault more directly recasts basis the political in terms of what can be referred to in terms of a government/rebellion dynamic. In other words, insofar as politics can be interpreted as a continuation of war, the field of the political is historically expressed for Foucault as the history of struggle; in such a system, the term "politics" in the Foucauldian sense comes to designates the free play of agonistic struggle between the exercise of power as government and the counter-historical movements of resistance.

Although, as we have seen, Foucault's war analytic of politics ultimately turns upon the struggle between the exercise of government and the counter-historical movements of resistance, what is at stake for Foucault in the government/rebellion war model of the political is how resistance, and neither sovereign power nor the history of the state acts as the historical motor of politics interpreted as a continuation of war. Thus, in *Society Must Be Defended* Foucault redefines the paradigm of rebellion in a way that

⁹⁴³ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 108.

captures this motive. “Rebellion,” Foucault writes, “is therefore not the destruction of a peaceful system of laws for some reason;” instead, rather, “rebellion is nothing but the obverse of war.”⁹⁴⁴ As the “obverse” of politics as war, rebellion is the constituent counter-part to the history of politics interpreted as a continuation of war, without which the political could only assume the form of an archē. According to Foucault, however, this means that the war model of the political necessarily includes resistance as a permanent feature of politics—that is, rebellion is a permanent “response to the war the government never stops waging.”⁹⁴⁵ As Foucault writes, then, while the history of the political as “government means their war against us,” the permanent possibility of “rebellion is our war against them.”⁹⁴⁶ While Foucault’s agonistic conception of the political, in which politics is expressed in the interplay between the war of government waged against its own impossibility, and the movements of resistance launched against the continuation of government appears to reproduce the we/they antithesis in Schmitt’s theory of the political, Foucault’s agonistic theory of politics refuses the basic presuppositions required by Schmitt. Although the political as agōn is indeed inherently partisan according to Foucault, the agonistic dimension of politics that assumes the form of a struggle between adversaries cannot be reduced, as is the case in Schmitt’s work, to the sovereign state. Whereas in Schmitt, the primacy of the state is presupposed in such a way so that the we/they antithesis which designates the criteria proper to the domain of the political is bound to the permanence of sovereign power, in Foucault’s model it is the permanence of resistance that makes possible not simply the distinction, but the struggle between adversaries that gives the political its constituent logic.⁹⁴⁷

While in Foucault’s work the history of the state, of sovereignty, and of the exercise of power as government all still hold an elemental place in his theory of politics, the agonistic conception of politics as explored in *Society Must Be Defended* reveals resistance as the vital (albeit historically neglected) concept in the history of political theory. In contrast to Mouffe’s neo-Schmittian model which expels resistance from the field of the political in order to arrive at an liberal democratic politics without

⁹⁴⁴ Ibid, 108.

⁹⁴⁵ Ibid, 108.

⁹⁴⁶ Ibid, 108.

⁹⁴⁷ See: Carl Schmitt, *The Concept of the Political*, 19.

antagonism, it is my contention that the narrative arc of *Society Must Be Defended*, in which politics is interpreted as a continuation of war, must be understood as an attempt to reintroduce the general problematic of resistance into the field of the political as agōn, and furthermore that this strategic inclusion of resistance within the field to which politics refers invokes a theory of anarchism as its very basis. In order to substantiate the claim that the history of the political can be read from the perspective of war instead of the advent of sovereignty, Foucault offers an alternative reading of the *Leviathan* in order to both account for the question of resistance within the history of political theory, as well as to rethink the history of politics of resistance as itself of a paradigm of what Foucault will refer to as “civil war” or “social war.”⁹⁴⁸ As we will see, while both Schmitt and Mouffe presuppose a specific continuity between the state and politics, in Foucault’s reading of Hobbes the concept of “civil war” designates the key concept by which the political can be understood as agōn. Thus although, Foucault’s reversal of Clausewitz is established as an agonistic conception of the political in which politics designates the struggle between the history of government and the counter-history of resistance, his rereading of Hobbes asserts a unique understanding of the political from the perspective of resistance, in which the concept and practice of civil war reflects a conscious decision to reframe the political agonistically.

Within the history of political theory, Foucault turns to Hobbes as the political philosopher whose understanding of politics begins by positing a distinct relationship between war and political power.⁹⁴⁹ In this way, it is necessary to read Hobbes, according to Foucault, in order to understand how war first emerges as the principle of intelligibility of power relations in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. More specifically, however, despite more orthodox readings of the question of politics in the *Leviathan*, Foucault reads Hobbes’s text as a critical exploration into the possibility of interpreting politics as a continuation of war. It is well known amongst political theorists that Hobbes takes the condition of war as the inverse of the sovereign state; the eradication of the condition of war prior to the existence of the state is the ontological foundation that makes possible the birth of sovereign power and the state. In this regard,

⁹⁴⁸ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 60; 89.

⁹⁴⁹ *Ibid*, 89.

Foucault reads Hobbes's text as being centered around two seminal questions in which the war/politics relation is at once understood as the very basis of the political, as well as that which allows for the advent of sovereignty and the birth of the state. Foucault first maintains that the initial question that drives Hobbes's theory of politics and the political asks "what is this war that exists before the State, and which the State is, in theory, destined to end?"⁹⁵⁰ Second, Foucault claims that while the first question forms the critical background from which Hobbes's theory of politics begins, what is ultimately at stake in the *Leviathan* is to theorize how this condition of war, prior to the existence of the state, is invoked in order to ask how this "war give[s] birth to the state."⁹⁵¹ Here, the concept of "war" in Foucault's reading of the *Leviathan* at once designates a social condition prior to the state, as well as that which is to be eradicated from the field of the political in order to make the sovereign state possible. Importantly, in each of these questions, Foucault suggests that it is the concept of war and not that of the state that is invoked by Hobbes as the vital concept from which his theory regarding the emergence of modern politics is based. As we will see, because the condition of war is that which is presupposed by Hobbes, it is with the concepts of civil war and anarchy, and not that of sovereignty, that designate the key paradigm for an agonistic conception of the political.⁹⁵²

⁹⁵⁰ Ibid, 90.

⁹⁵¹ Ibid, 89.

⁹⁵² In order to affirm this position, Foucault returns to the way in which Hobbes defines the "state of nature" and offers an alternative reading pertaining to how the condition of war that characterizes the state of nature as such is to be understood. First, Foucault maintains that, by Hobbes own admission, what is referred to as the "state of nature" does not designate an actually existing condition of war as manifest in a real battle. Thus, Foucault writes that "in Hobbes's state of primitive war, the encounter, the confrontation, the clash, is not one between weapons or fists...there are no battles in Hobbes' primitive war, there is no blood and there are no corpses" (92). Accordingly, Foucault writes that within a state of nature, "[w]e are not at war; we are in what Hobbes specifically calls a state of war" (92). The state of war according to Foucault does not designate a fundamental battle between adversaries, but a social condition—that is a certain way of being in the world. "What does characterize the state of war," according to Foucault is "a sort of unending diplomacy between rivals who are naturally equal" (92). Understood as such, "war is born of equality and takes place in the element of that equality." (92). The condition of war that constitutes the existence of a state of nature prior to the state, does not therefore designate a condition of battle between adversaries; instead rather the domain proper to the state of war, and that which gives it its defining characteristic as such, is a condition of equality—that is war, designates for Foucault the principle of equality between differing groups of people. This condition of war within the domain of equality is what Foucault refers to as a "certain state of the interplay of representations" (93).

Because Foucault takes the paradigm of war, and not its elimination, as the constituent component of the political, what is at stake in *Society Must Be Defended* is not only a strategic reversal of Clausewitz's thesis on politics and war, but also an inversion of the general narrative arc of Hobbes's political treatise. Thus, while Hobbes traces the ways in which the condition of war that characterizes the state of nature is overcome in the advent of sovereignty, Foucault inverts this thesis and suggests that the condition of war is irreducible to the advent of sovereignty. Against traditional readings regarding the relation between the state of war and the advent of political power, Foucault importantly maintains to the contrary:

Hobbes turns war, the fact of war and the relationship of force that is actually manifested in the battle, into something that has nothing to do with constitution of sovereignty. The establishment of sovereignty has nothing to do with war.

Basically, Hobbes's discourse is a certain "no" to war.⁹⁵³

While in Hobbes's theory of the political, the eradication of the state of war is both what is required and that which makes possible the emergence of modern politics in the form of sovereignty, in Foucault's reading of Hobbes, the condition of war is irreducible to the constitution of sovereignty. This is to say that sovereignty—indeed the emergence of sovereign power—has a history, according to Foucault, distinct from the political paradigm of war. Rather than a linear history of the political in which the condition of war prior to the state is fully eliminated by sovereign power, Foucault reads the *Leviathan* as a treatise on two conflicting understandings of political history, one from the perspective of the state and sovereign power, and the other told from the counter-historical condition of war. What is unique about Foucault's reading of *Leviathan* in the above passage lies in his claim that "Hobbes turns war...into something that has nothing to do with the constitution of sovereignty." In other words, while the *Leviathan* is primarily read as a historical theory pertaining to the constitution of sovereign power, Foucault maintains that the text ought to be understood as making a fundamental statement on the political paradigm of war. "Hence the problem," Foucault asks, "to

⁹⁵³ Ibid, 97.

whom, to what, is the elimination of war addressed, given that no previous theory of power had given war the role that Hobbes so stubbornly denies it?”⁹⁵⁴

By asking to whom Hobbes’s text attempts to address by eliminating the condition of war from the field of the political, Foucault strategically shifts the focus of *Leviathan* from the question of sovereignty to the politics of resistance. Indeed, insofar as the question of war in Hobbes is irreducible to the state and the advent of sovereign power, Foucault reads the general problematic of war in the *Leviathan* as pointing toward a completely separate history of politics and the political in which resistance is its key component. In this way, rather than reading the elimination of war in Hobbes as being posed against a “specific or determinate theory, or something that could be defined as his adversary,” Foucault maintains that “[a]t the time Hobbes was writing, there was in fact something that could be described not as his partner in polemic, but as his strategic opposite number.”⁹⁵⁵ The “strategic opposite” Foucault refers to here reveals an alternative principle of intelligibility from which to read the political not simply in terms of the history of sovereignty, but rather as a form of politics expressed as war in the struggle between the exercise of government and counter-historical movement of resistance. Indeed, in Foucault’s unorthodox reading of the *Leviathan* what Hobbes attempts to eliminate through the advent of sovereignty are the discourses and politics of struggle, conflict and resistance. More specifically, by “strategic opposite” Foucault clarifies that it is a “certain theoretical and political strategy that Hobbes specifically wanted to eliminate and render impossible.”⁹⁵⁶ Two ideas are of key importance here. First, Foucault reads *Leviathan* as a strategic discourse that attempts to expel the forms of the insurrectionary historico-political discourse of politics as war from the field of the political. Additionally, Foucault maintains that Hobbes attempts to eliminate not only the historical knowledge of struggle, but the “political strategy” of resistance as well. With Foucault, then, we have an alternative reading of Hobbes in which what is at stake in is a political history of resistance rather than the advent of sovereignty. What is to be eradicated from the field of the political in the advent of sovereignty is thus both a

⁹⁵⁴ Ibid, 97.

⁹⁵⁵ Ibid, 97.

⁹⁵⁶ Ibid, 97.

knowledge of history of struggle and the use of this knowledge as a political strategy of resistance. In other words, what the politics of sovereignty attempts to mask and overcome is the politics of resistance manifest as a socio-political condition of war.

By reading *Leviathan* from the perspective of war and resistance instead of sovereignty, Foucault reveals that what motivates Hobbes's text, and makes his argument possible, is to be found in his attempt to expel the historical knowledge of the history of politics as war. This is to say that in Foucault's reading of the question of politics posed in the *Leviathan*, what Hobbes attempts to render obsolete is the historical knowledge of the political as agōn; the advent of sovereignty theorized by Hobbes in the *Leviathan* is established to disrupt and discount the continuation of politics as war. In a manner that fundamentally reverses the general trajectory of the history of the political as told in the *Leviathan*, Foucault therefore maintains:

What Hobbes is trying, then, not to refute, but to eliminate and render impossible—his strategic opposite number—is a certain way of making historical knowledge work within the political struggle. To be more specific, *Leviathan's* strategic opposite number is, I think, the political use that was being made in political struggles of a certain historical knowledge pertaining to...all these acts of war, all these feats of battle, and the real struggles that go on in the laws and institutions that apparently regulate power.⁹⁵⁷

Understood in this way, the question of sovereignty—indeed its institution—in the thought of Hobbes is established in order to “render impossible” the discourses and politics of resistance. Despite Hobbes's intentions, the history of the political does not therefore trace a linear progression from the state of nature and condition of war to the institution of sovereign power, but instead the fundamental struggle between the historical conception of politics as agōn and politics as archē. Thus, the “enemy” Foucault writes, “or rather the enemy discourse Hobbes is addressing—is the discourse that could be heard in the civil struggles that were tearing the state apart.”⁹⁵⁸ What Hobbes attempts to ward off with the turn toward sovereignty are the discourses of struggles against the state. Yet, in this way what is ultimately at stake in Foucault's

⁹⁵⁷ Ibid, 98.

⁹⁵⁸ Ibid, 99.

reading of *Leviathan* is how the problem of war—indeed its continuation—renders both the discourses of and politics as resistance more acute.

In order to rethink the history of the political in a way that is irreducible to the standard history of the state, of sovereignty, and of government Foucault reads Hobbes's text as itself fundamentally turning upon an agonistic, rather than archic conception of politics. Yet, the interpretation of politics as the continuation of an agonistic struggle manifest in the politics of war necessarily turns upon a theory of resistance as the vital and central component of an agonistic conception of politics as such. Indeed, although Hobbes attempts to expel the condition of warfare from the history of the political, in Foucault's strategic reading of the *Leviathan* the political question of resistance is reintroduced into the field of politics as both a continuation of war as well as a paradigm of politics as war. It is with this interpretation of politics as the continuation of war, that Foucault is able to begin to both rethink the political in terms in terms of an agonistic history of struggle, as well as how resistance designates the key paradigm of the political as such. In order to both explore an agonistic history of the political, and further how this theory of the political ultimately turns upon the politics of resistance, Foucault invokes the concept of civil war as unique paradigm of the political. Thus, in a letter written four years prior to the lectures comprising *Society Must Be Defended* Foucault affirms this position and writes that the question of power, politics, and the political ought to be analyzed in the form of the "most disparaged of all wars: neither Hobbes, nor Clausewitz, nor the class struggle: civil war."⁹⁵⁹ It is with the concept of civil war that the specific continuity between Foucault's theory of resistance and his theory politics can be fully understood; indeed, with the paradigm of civil war, Foucault not only seeks to rethink politics outside of the model of the *Leviathan*, but also against the Marxist reduction of resistance to the struggle between classes.

Throughout *Society Must Be Defended*, Foucault importantly invokes the term "civil war" to designate the topology of the political in its most paradigmatic form, as well as alternate paradigm for the politics of resistance. As a paradigm of the political, Foucault suggests that politics as the continuation of war refuses the logic of the history

⁹⁵⁹ Qtd. in Alessandro Fontana and Mauro Bertani, "Situating the Lectures," 282. The letter cited here is originally pulled from Daniel Defert, "Chronologie," *Dits et écrits*, vol. 1, 30-32.

of politics as told by Hobbes, whereby it is with the term “civil war” instead of the state or the advent of sovereignty can be understood as the key term within the history of political thought. In Foucault’s interpretation of Hobbes, the historical continuity between the state and politics is disrupted to the point where the basic thesis of *Leviathan* is fundamentally reversed; rather than assuming the advent of sovereignty as the precondition of politics, Foucault suggests that the question of politics finds its consistency and is historically elaborated within the paradigm of civil war. At the same time, however, it is not just the standard narrative of Hobbes that Foucault’s concept of “civil war” resists, but also that of Marx’s theory of “class struggle.” Indeed, while others have noted that *Society Must Be Defended* criticizes Marxism for reducing power relations to the state and class, the concept of civil war is established, in part, by Foucault as a critique of the Marxist notion of class struggle.⁹⁶⁰ The question of “civil war” as set forth in *Society Must Be Defended* is therefore not simply an alternative paradigm of the political and politics but, more importantly, a paradigm of the general form resistance takes within this alternative conception of politics. Because the concept and praxis of civil war is that which is to be expelled from the field of the political, Foucault reads Hobbes as revealing a way in which the political concept of civil war can be redefined as a paradigm of resistance. In Foucault, then, the concept of civil war at once designates an alternative political paradigm in which the history of the political can be understood agonistically—that is as a history of permanent struggle and conflict—as well as how this conception of the political necessarily turns upon the politics of resistance as its defining characteristic.

In his unorthodox reading of the history of politics in the *Leviathan*, Foucault first reveals that what Hobbes attempts to ward off with the advent of sovereignty is not a mythical condition of a fundamental war of all against all, but an entirely different conception of the political in which politics as the continuation of war is conditioned by the permanence of resistance. It is not a state of nature that is overcome by the birth of the sovereign Leviathan; instead, rather, Foucault asserts that it is the “discourse of struggle and permanent civil war that Hobbes wards off by making all wars and

⁹⁶⁰ Mark Kelly, *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, 37.

conquests depend upon a contract, and by thus rescuing the theory of the state.”⁹⁶¹ As both concept and practice, “civil war” for Foucault is first and foremost a counter-historical discourse of struggle and resistance, or what is referred to throughout *Society Must Be Defended* as the historico-political discourses on society. As an example of these types of political historicism, Foucault turns to the discourses of resistance as found in the writings and practices of the Diggers, a seventeenth century group of Protestant radicals and historical forerunner of modern anarchism. By turning to the Diggers as an example of the forms of political historicism excluded by Hobbes, what is at stake for Foucault is how the writings of the Diggers invoke the discourse of “civil war” to describe the field of the political as a fundamental struggle between the exercise of government and the counter-historical necessity of rebellion. “Civil war” in this context “functions,” according to Foucault, “in both a political and historical mode, both as program for political action and search for historical knowledge.”⁹⁶² It is therefore not a mythical war of all against all that Hobbes invokes as his opponent in the *Leviathan*, but the politics of resistance, of resistance as civil war. For Foucault, then, “Hobbes’s philosophical-juridical discourse was a way of blocking this political historicism, which was the discourse and the knowledge that was actually active in the political struggles of the seventeenth century.”⁹⁶³

While the concept of civil war at one designates a discourse and praxis of struggle and resistance, this same term for Foucault is makes possible the inversion of Clausewitz in which the history of politics can be interpreted as a continuation of war. Indeed, what Foucault refers to in terms of “permanent warfare” designates the domain proper to history of the political; as a paradigm of the political civil war means for Foucault that the political more correctly assumes the form of *agōn* instead of *archē*.⁹⁶⁴ As *agōn*, the permanence of civil war is what gives the political its defining characteristic as such, and it is the permanent possibility of civil war amongst the history of the political in which politics can ultimately be interpreted as a history of struggle. With the concept of civil war constituting the nexus between history and politics, Foucault remarks that “[h]istory

⁹⁶¹ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 99.

⁹⁶² *Ibid*, 109.

⁹⁶³ *Ibid*, 111.

⁹⁶⁴ *Ibid*, 88.

thus becomes a knowledge of struggles that is deployed and that functions within a field of struggles; there is now a link between the political fight and historical knowledge.”⁹⁶⁵ Here, civil war is the concept that designates, for Foucault, the way in which the history of the political can be interpreted as a history of agonistic struggle. Yet, because civil war implies that the history of the political can be interpreted as a history of struggle, this means that politics is retheorized by Foucault as a mode of praxis defined by the permanent possibility of resistance: “[r]ebellion is therefore inscribed within a whole historical analysis that reveals war to be a permanent feature of social relations.”⁹⁶⁶ In Foucault’s unorthodox reading of the *Leviathan*, “civil war” is revealed as the key term by which the political can be shown in its paradigmatic form as agōn.

With the concept of “civil war” designating the key paradigm from which to read the history of the political, Foucault’s work in *Society Must Be Defended* reveals a radically alternative hypothesis or theory of the political that cannot be reduced to the dual paradigms of the exercise of government and the sovereign state. Although unorthodox within the history of political theory, Foucault’s reading of the question of politics and the history of the political from the view point of civil war has been affirmed by other theorists. Inspired in part by Foucault’s rereading of Hobbes in *Society Must Be Defended*, Tiqqun’s *Introduction to Civil War* has been seminal in this regard, and is importantly established as a critical attempt to rewrite the political from the perspective of civil war. To be sure, there is a specific continuity between Foucault and Tiqqun in regard to the way in which the term “civil war,” and not that of the state, designates the principle of intelligibility of the political. Thus, while in *Society Must Be Defended* Foucault maintains that “war is the historical principle behind the working of power,” and hence that it is “possible to analyze political power as war,”⁹⁶⁷ Tiqqun radicalizes this thesis and claims that “the point of view of civil war is the point of view of the political.”⁹⁶⁸ Insofar as the domain of the political can be understood as a history of civil war, Tiqqun furthermore affirms, as does Foucault, that civil war is *primary* with respect to the political. For Tiqqun, then, insofar as the “modern State came into being in order

⁹⁶⁵ Ibid, 170.

⁹⁶⁶ Ibid, 110.

⁹⁶⁷ Ibid, 18-19.

⁹⁶⁸ Tiqqun, *Introduction to Civil War*, 35.

to put an end to civil war,” this means that “both historically and by its own admission, it is *secondary vis-à-vis civil war*” (original emphasis).⁹⁶⁹ It is in this way that civil war can be understood as key term within the history of political theory. In Foucault we find that *civil war forms the basic principle from which to read the history of the political situated at the horizon of the state—that is, civil war is not only that which designates the principle of intelligibility of the political, but that which in its position of primacy allows for the history of the political to assume the form of an agonistic history of struggle, a uniquely anarchic paradigm of resistance that designates the characteristic specific to politics.*

While the standard history of political theory from Aristotle, Hobbes, and Schmitt presupposes the state and the exercise of government as the permanent component that distinguishes the domain of the political from other domains, *Society Must Be Defended* reverses the orthodox narrative of Western political theory and suggests that the history of politics and the political is a history of agonistic struggle—that is, a history through which resistance marks the permanent component in which politics assumes the paradigmatic form of civil war. Indeed, the key intervention made by Foucault in *Society Must Be Defended* is that the history of the political can be understood on condition of what Hobbes attempts to eradicate with the advent of sovereign power; rather than being overcome by sovereignty, civil war reveals the field of the political in its most paradigmatic form. As an agonistic domain of struggle, what is therefore at stake in Foucault’s rereading of Hobbes is that the permanence of the political is attested to by the permanence of “civil war.” It is in this way that Tiqqun—via Foucault’s reading of Hobbes—writes that “it is civil war—*stasis* in Greek—that is permanence, and the modern state will have been a mere *reaction process* to this permanence” (original emphasis).⁹⁷⁰ As *agōn*, it is resistance and the paradigm of civil war—what Tiqqun refers to as “stasis”—rather than the state, that gives the political its historicity and form. To be sure, *Society Must Be Defended* ought to read not only as a fundamental statement on the historical politics of resistance, but also an alternative hypothesis of the political that finds its basis in the permanence of civil war, a certain theory of stasiology. *The*

⁹⁶⁹ Ibid, 72.

⁹⁷⁰ Ibid, 70.

permanence of stasis, of civil war within the field of the political designates a specific rupture with the logic of the archē that has hitherto shaped the narrative of Western political theory; stasis, as an agonistic paradigm of the political, means that the history of politics is made possible and emerges as civil war, a permanent struggle between the history of the state and the exercise of government and the counter-history of resistance.

In a recently published text that continues his ongoing project to rethink the basic tenets of Western political theory titled, *Stasis: Civil War as a Political Paradigm*, Agamben like Tiquun traces how the concept of “stasis” designates the key paradigm by which the history of politics and the political can be rethought in terms of civil war. According to Agamben, stasis translated from the Greek *oikeios polemos* can be defined as a “war within the household,” and is (albeit historically neglected) “an integral part of the political life of the Greeks.”⁹⁷¹ Because stasis is an inherent and coextensive component to the Greek’s notion of politics, Agamben writes that “*stasis* acts as its revealer; it attests to its irreducible presence in the *polis*”—that is, in its permanent and “irreducible presence” within the field of the political, civil war according to Agamben reveals the specificity of the political as such (original emphasis).⁹⁷² Indeed, because stasis acts as the revealer of the political, what is at stake in Agamben’s text is that politics must be redefined on condition of this paradigm of civil war. In Foucauldian language, Agamben therefore writes that “[w]e must therefore conceive of politics as a field of forces...between them, civil war.”⁹⁷³ Consistent, then, with Foucault’s theory regarding how the dynamic field of forces manifest in the relationship between power and resistance ought to be analyzed as a relation of struggle instead of a theory of sovereignty, Agamben suggests that politics, which reproduces the force relations between power and resistance, must therefore be analyzed in terms of civil war. Stasis, or civil war, not only reframes the political agonistically, but in doing so further redefines politics as a movement of resistance. Indeed, insofar as Agamben defines stasis as a “war within the home (*oikos*),” civil war redefines the politics of resistance as a permanent and ongoing struggle with what was outlined in chapter one as the Aristotelian notion of

⁹⁷¹ Giorgio Agamben, *Stasis: Civil War as a Political Paradigm*, 8.

⁹⁷² *Ibid*, 11.

⁹⁷³ *Ibid*, 22.

“oikonomia” (government of men). *Indeed, the stasis that acts as the revealer of the political simultaneously reveals politics as a paradigm of resistance; within its irreducibility to the field of the political, stasis means that politics is that which becomes manifest in the struggle against the exercise of government as a form of power—that is, stasis designates the way in which the primacy of resistance is expressed politically as civil war.*

5.5 An Anarchist Hypothesis of the Political Emerges as a Theory of Stasiology

The lectures comprising *Society Must Be Defended* represent Foucault’s most detailed analysis and historical examination into the question of politics and the history of the political. By analyzing the paradigmatic condition of war in terms of the principle of intelligibility from which to understand the history of politics, as well as the correlative historico-political discourses of civil war and resistance, Foucault’s work throughout these lectures exemplifies the critical attempt to detach political theory from the discourses of sovereignty that have hitherto conditioned the narrative history of the political. In other words, *Society Must Be Defended* represents Foucault’s most concentrated effort to cut off the head of the king in political theory. Although some commentators have suggested that Foucault’s work in *Society Must Be Defended* simply pluralizes history, and as such fails in his attempted regicide of political theory, it is my contention that the agonistic war model of the political is an effective way to rethink the history of the political against its history as a continuation of the political as archē.⁹⁷⁴ While many of Foucault’s writings and lectures throughout the 1970’s are established in order to think through this conceptual impasse in relation to the question of power, the general focus of *Society Must Be Defended* is not simply to analyze relations of power in terms of the historical continuation of war but, more specifically, to draw a correspondence between his theory of power and the war model of politics; it is in this

⁹⁷⁴ Andrew W. Neal, “Cutting Off the King’s Head: *Society Must Be Defended* and the Problem of Sovereignty,” in *Alternatives*, 29;4 (2004): 379-380.

critical equivalence between the analytic of power and the war analytic of politics that Foucault effectively cuts off the king's head in political theory.

While the previous chapter addressed—via the fifth thesis on power from *The History of Sexuality*—the way in which resistance is primary with power relations, and hence that the very nexus between power and resistance ought to be analyzed in terms of a permanent struggle, this chapter outlined the ways in which the question of resistance reappears as the very basis from which Foucault begins to interpret politics as a continuation of war—that is as a history of struggle, and thus as a domain of *agōn*. Insofar as resistance is primary with power, its permanent presence continuously transforming relations of power into relations of struggle, Foucault recasts this thesis as the criteria that gives the political its historicity as such; resistance according to Foucault is what gives the history of the political its form as a continuation of war. Indeed, this is what I hold to be the penultimate claim made by Foucault in *Society Must Be Defended*: in its irreducibility to state sovereignty and the exercise of power as government, the war model of politics ultimately reveals an agonistic conception of the political made possible by the permanent possibility of resistance. Politics therefore reproduces the relationship between power and resistance and takes the paradigmatic form of “civil war” in which stasis designates the principle through which the history of the political can be retheorized as a history of struggle, as well as how this theory of the political ultimately reveals an alternative theory of politics that begins with the question of resistance.

In Foucault's reading of the history of the political, it is the continuation of the condition of war, of stasis that marks the condition of possibility of politics, and it is this history of politics that Foucault views Hobbes as attempting to eradicate from the field of the political. Nevertheless, Foucault's theory of the political has been criticized for celebrating a return to the condition of war prior the advent of the state. In this regard Hansen writes that “[b]y reducing power to strategic action, by rejecting contract theory, and by neglecting the politics of democratic consent, Foucault is said to fall back behind the insights of contractarianism, serving up an unpalpable spectacle of the struggle of all against all.”⁹⁷⁵ While it might appear that Foucault advocates for a return to a state of existence prior to the advent of the modern sovereign state, what is at stake in Foucault's

⁹⁷⁵ Beatrice Hansen, *Critique of Violence*, 36.

theory of the political is not a return to condition of war prior to the state as described by Hobbes, Locke and others. Instead Foucault's goal is more adequately to trace the continuation of an alternative history of the political in terms of a counter-history of agonistic struggle manifest in the political paradigm of war. By warding off the political as agōn, what is ultimately at stake in Foucault's reading of the *Leviathan* is that Hobbes attempts to eradicate the politics of resistance from the field of the political.

Consequently, however, this means for Foucault that Hobbes's text ultimately reveals the very possibility of an alternative theory of the political in which the condition of possibility of politics is made possible when civil war designates a permanent component through which the political is expressed historically. As agōn, civil war forms the paradigm in which the political is historically elaborated, and the permanence of the political is itself attested to by the permanence of civil war amongst the dynamic field to which politics refers. Yet, because civil war designates the way in which politics assumes the form of an agōn rather than archē, the political paradigm of civil war simultaneously designates for Foucault a political paradigm of resistance as the constituent criteria of politics. With Foucault's work in *Society Must Be Defended*, it is my contention that it is possible to think of the political no longer as a project in pursuit of, and determined by, the state, sovereignty and the exercise of government, but rather as a form of agonistic struggle, a domain conditioned by the permanence of civil war and the primacy of resistance.

Taking the primacy of resistance as the basic foundation from which Foucault begins to rethink the history of politics as a continuation of war, the overall goal of this chapter has been to demonstrate how Foucault's interpretation of politics and the history of the political in *Society Must Be Defended* not only reveals an agonistic model of the political, but an anarchist hypothesis of the political in which resistance designates the key criteria through which politics assume the form of an agōn as such. In chapter two we saw how for anarchist philosopher Benjamin Tucker an anarchist theory of the political relies upon a fundamental distinction between government and resistance in order to account for an alternative history for interpreting politics on the basis of a history of struggle.⁹⁷⁶ Insofar as the distinctions between government and resistance designates

⁹⁷⁶ Benjamin Tucker, "The Individual, Society and the State," 22.

that which is proper to the domain of the political, I further outlined how Kropotkin invokes this distinction as the basis from which to interpret the history of politics as an ongoing and permanent civil war between the principle of government and the principle of anarchy.⁹⁷⁷ It is my contention in this regard that Foucault's work in *Society Must Be Defended* both mirrors the distinction between government and resistance as the central criteria for a critical theory of the political, as well as how this distinction is that which gives the political its form as an agonistic continuation of war. Rather than beginning with the advent of sovereignty as the precondition of modern politics, we have seen how Foucault's genealogical methodology first begins with an analysis of "subjugated knowledges," or discourses of resistance in order to interpret history as the history of struggle. For Foucault, it is these discourses of resistance, and not the history of the archē, that reveal the nature of the political as a continuation of war. Furthermore, we have seen how the hallmark statement of *Society Must Be Defended*—that is, that politics is the continuation of war by other means—redefines the term politics on condition of resistance. As a continuation of war, the agonistic conception of politics necessarily refers to and is made possible by the permanent potentiality of resistance amongst the domain to which politics refers; the political as a continuation of war is thus irreducible to the history of the state according to Foucault. Finally, in his rereading of Hobbes, Foucault reverses the orthodox narrative of Western political theory and suggests that rather than reading the history of the political through the eradication of the condition of war as is the case in the *Leviathan*, it is instead the permanence of civil war (stasis) that defines the key paradigm of the political as such. By tracing the history of politics and the political not simply as a continuation of war, but in terms of the paradigm of civil war, Foucault reveals how the political is historically manifest as a permanent domain of struggle between the history of the state and the counter-historical movements of resistance, revolt, and rebellion.

⁹⁷⁷ Peter Kropotkin, "A few Thoughts About the Essence of Anarchism," 201. Here Kropotkin contests the Marxist notion of class struggle as the principle motor of history, and suggests that "[f]rom the earliest times these two currents were found struggling against each other. They continue to do so, and the history of mankind is the history of their struggles." Indeed, as I maintained in chapter two, history according to Kropotkin is itself manifest in the permanent war between the authoritarian principle as manifest in the state, sovereignty, and the exercise of government and the principle of anarchy manifest in counter-historical movements of resistance.

With the paradigm of civil war designating an agonistic theory of the political that turns upon the primacy of resistance, it is my claim that Foucault war model of the political transcends Schmitt and Mouffe's theories of the political, and better finds its consistency in the framework of anarchism. In a manner akin to Kropotkin, Foucault's agonistic model of the political can be vitally distinguished from Mouffe's recent attempts to reframe Schmitt's model of the political in the context of what she refers to as "radical politics today."⁹⁷⁸ While Mouffe maintains that the field of the political is to be defined as the "antagonistic dimension which is inherent to all human societies," what she refers to as agonistic dimension of politics is set to effectively eradicate resistance from the domain of the political as such.⁹⁷⁹ In doing so, however, what Mouffe refers to as politics effectively reduces the permanent dimension of agonism inherent to the political to a politics of *archē*, insofar as politics is defined as an engagement with the exercise of governmental institutions.⁹⁸⁰ Indeed, what is ultimately at stake for Mouffe is to eradicate an agonistic conception of politics that "refuses to become government."⁹⁸¹ Similar to the position of Hobbes, in eradicating from the field of the political the dissident forms of politics as resistance—a form of politics that refuses government—Mouffe's work can be understood as a polemic against an anarchist theory of the political. While Mouffe's agonistic theory of the political posits a liberal, democratic pluralism as the ultimate horizon for agonistic politics, it is my contention that Foucault affirms an alternative and dissenting theory of the political that finds its basis in anarchism and not that of liberal democratic state. In other words, what is at stake in Foucault's conception (contra Mouffe) is precisely a form of politics of resistance that

⁹⁷⁸ Chantal Mouffe, *Agonistics*, 65-84.

⁹⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 2. Although she neglects a discussion of Foucault, Mouffe takes Paulo Virno, Michael Hardt, and Antonio Negri as opponents in the debate over the contemporary form radical politics ought to take, and proposes a direct contrast between the "strategy of withdrawal" as found in the works of the former theorists with "a different conception of radical politics envisaged in terms of 'engagement' with institutions, with the aim of bringing about a different hegemony" (66). For Mouffe's discussion of Hardt, Negri, and Virno's understanding of radical politics, see section titled "Critique as Withdrawal From" (66-71). Here Mouffe takes concern with Virno's concept of "exodus" (69) and Hardt and Negri's concept of "desertion" (70), and characterizes the radical politics of these theorists in terms of developing a form of resistance that "refuses to become government" (70). Against these forms of critique, Mouffe proposes what she refers to as "critique as hegemonic engagement with" (71).

⁹⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 71-77.

⁹⁸¹ *Ibid.*, 70.

refuses to become government—that is, in Foucault’s agonistic conception of the political, politics is what is animated as an art of not being governed. What is therefore required by Foucault is not the eradication of anarchy from the field of the political, but rather its return in the political movements of resistance, a specific movement in politics that could never assume the form of an *oikonomia*. Indeed, through Foucault we might take this further and suggest that an anarchist hypothesis of the political emerges as a theory of stasiology. While the power/resistance dynamic directly informs Foucault’s theory of politics, civil war—itsself a paradigm of resistance—is what reveals the field of the political in its anarchic specificity—that is, civil war designates the point in which the field of the political can never be fully solidified as *archē*.

Yet while the interpretation of politics as a continuation of war ultimately turns upon, as we have seen, an agonistic theory of politics and resistance, Foucault warns his audience that such discourses of politics as war are always in danger of either being co-opted by the state or, even more insidiously, as tending toward the totalitarian logic of “social racism.”⁹⁸² Thus in the final lecture of *Society Must Be Defended*, Foucault claims that “no matter whether it is Fourier at the beginning of the century or the anarchists at the end of it, you will always find a racist component of socialism.”⁹⁸³ Given that anarchism traditionally maintains a commitment to the eradication of all forms of oppression, Foucault’s critique in the final pages of *Society Must Be Defended* strikes at the heart of the tradition fundamentally premised upon anti-racism. Indeed, since Foucault defines “social racism” in terms of a “socialist state which must exercise the right to kill or the right to eliminate, or the right to disqualify,” his critique of anarchism initially appears unfounded insofar as anarchists traditionally argue that the state (socialist or otherwise) is inherently inconsistent with anarchist principles.⁹⁸⁴ More seriously, however, what is at stake in Foucault’s critique of anarchism is certain biopolitical rationale that connects the politics of revolutionary socialisms to the logic of

⁹⁸² Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 261. What Foucault refers to as “social racism” is a consequence to the ways in which various forms of socialism including anarchism, Marxism, the Commune, Blanquism, all neglected a “critique of the theme of biopower” (261). For Foucault, then, the “most racist forms of socialism were therefore, Blanquism of course, and then the Commune, and then anarchism” (262).

⁹⁸³ *Ibid.*, 261.

⁹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 261.

state sovereignty. Indeed, while the final lecture of *Society Must Be Defended* is often taken by Foucault's readers as introducing the concept of "biopower" into his wider critical lexicon, the term itself is introduced not only to designate a specific form of state power directed at the management of populations, but rather as the nexus that connects revolutionary discourse and practice to the logic of state sovereignty. Revolutionary discourse and the logic of state sovereignty first collide according to Foucault with the "idea that the essential function of society [that which replaces the state in revolutionary discourse] or the state [sovereignty], or whatever it is that must replace the state, is to control life, to manage it."⁹⁸⁵ Understood as such, revolutionary discourses ultimately collide with the logic of sovereignty and tend toward a rationale of "social racism" inasmuch as they both seek to manage life in the constitution of political order. In other words, both revolutionary discourse and sovereign theory reproduce what Foucault refers to as biopower—that is, with or without the state, they both attempt to manage—which is to say *govern*—the life of a population in regard to specific ends. Insofar as revolutionary discourse reproduces the logic of the state, Foucault seems to be suggesting that this is because 20th century forms of socialism never solved the problem of government; in seeking to overthrow the power of the state, the idea of revolution produces and constitutes the founding of another political order.

If anarchism and other socialist discourses from the nineteenth century contain a racist component according to Foucault, this is because these discourses often tend toward a form of totalitarianism by presupposing a certain universality of how life ought to be managed. Thus, rather than eradicating the problem of power through the destruction of the state, revolutionary theory and praxis reproduce power as "social racism," which is to say biopolitically in the management, or government of life. Even more insidiously, Foucault additionally locates a racist component to traditional forms of struggle employed in revolutionary praxis. "Whenever," Foucault laments:

socialism has been forced to stress the problem of struggle, the struggle against the enemy, of the elimination of the enemy in capitalist society, racism does raise its head, because it is the only way in which socialist thought, which is after all

⁹⁸⁵ Ibid, 261.

very much bound up with the themes of biopower, can rationalize the murder of its enemies.⁹⁸⁶

While Foucault admits that not all forms of revolutionary praxis turn upon the “elimination of the enemy” in the sense suggested above, revolutionary praxis is biopolitical insofar as the concept of struggle can only be conceived in terms of the elimination of one’s enemy.⁹⁸⁷ While Foucault’s examples of “social racism” are taken from the movements that sought to control state power as a means towards achieving revolution, his critique nevertheless points to certain continuity between revolutionary theory and what he refers to as the sovereign “power to *foster* life or *disallow* it to the point of death the sovereign right let live” (original emphasis).⁹⁸⁸ Thus, although social racism appears in the failure to adequately deal with the question of government, it also appears in the failure to rethink the possibility of a form of politics distinct from the logic of sovereignty. In attempting to overcome the violence of the state with revolutionary violence, revolutionary praxis as such is simply a politics of sovereignty without a state.

The forms of “social racism” Foucault describes are not endemic to anarchism necessarily, but rather to revolutionary socialism, and perhaps even the concept of revolution itself. Nevertheless, anarchist theory ought to take seriously the nexus that connects revolutionary praxis to the logic of both government and sovereignty. Although Foucault’s critique is quite damning to the tradition of radical politics, especially anarchism, his point is not to discount the possibility of a radical political theory, but instead to call form a non-universalizing form of politics as resistance that refuses the logics of government and sovereign power. If the logic of revolution coincides with and reproduces biopower, we might read the final pages of *Society Must Be Defended* as Foucault asserting a new basis for radical politics in the transition from revolution to a politics as resistance. Indeed, if as Foucault suggests that the war model of the political and the revolutionary project that sustains it, have the potentiality to develop into “social racism,” what is at stake for Foucault is that the question of revolution might have to be significantly modified or even abandoned as the key focal point of radical politics. In this

⁹⁸⁶ Ibid, 262.

⁹⁸⁷ By way of qualification, Foucault writes: “[w]hen it is simply a matter of eliminating the adversary in economic terms, or of taking away his privileges, there is no need for racism” (262).

⁹⁸⁸ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 138.

regard, it is my contention that the very possibility of an anarchist politics of resistance can no longer be elaborated in terms of the revolutionary overthrow of power leading to a future classless and stateless society, but instead as an art of not being governed. In this regard, the following and final chapter seeks to establish a specific continuity between Foucault's agonistic conception of the political and his turn toward the study of ethics in order to outline a unique way to conceive of an anarchic, insurrectionary politics of resistance that could never assume the form of an archē. My claim will be that what Foucault refers to in the lectures series that follows the 1975-1976 courses titled *Security, Territory, Population* as "revolts of conduct" and "resistances of conduct" offers a unique way to think about resistance neither as struggle for or over power, nor as a revolutionary overthrow of existing power relations, but in terms of a permanent ethos of revolt, an insurrectionary struggle towards ungovernable forms-of-life.⁹⁸⁹ Reconceiving an anarchist politics of resistance as such, also necessitates a fundamental reconsideration of anarchy as well.

⁹⁸⁹ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 196.

Chapter 6

6 The First Revolt: Politics as an Ethics of Resistance to Government

*Recent liberation movements suffer from the fact that they cannot find any principle on which to base the elaboration of a new ethics. They need an ethics, but they cannot find any other ethics than an ethics founded on so-called scientific knowledge of what the self is, what desire is, what the unconscious is, and so on.*⁹⁹⁰

*Ethics is a practice; ethos a manner of being...we have to raise the problem of...a nonacceptance of the passivity of our own governments...this attitude is an ethical one, but it is also political.*⁹⁹¹

--Michel Foucault

The previous three chapters have sought to advance a specific continuity within Foucault's works around the concept of resistance, while simultaneously highlighting the ways in which the emphasis on a critical conceptualization of resistance reveals a vitally new way to understand Foucault's critical inquiries into power, governmentality, and the history of politics. In chapter three I outlined how what Foucault refers to throughout various periods in his work as "critique," or the "critical attitude" that underlies the basis of philosophy since Kant, allows for a new way to interpret Foucault's larger project and draw connections between the differing periods of his thought with respect to the general question of resistance. With reference to the unique methodological approach to the study of power and politics invoked by in *On the Government of the Living* under the portmanteau "anarchaeology"—a critical methodology that begins anarchically, or on condition of what Foucault refers to as the "non-necessity of all power of whatever kind"—I maintained that such approach to the field of power ultimately reveals for Foucault a new way to read the history of the political.⁹⁹² Rather than beginning with the first principle of the archē, and thus that politics can be reducible to the techniques of

⁹⁹⁰ Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics," in *Ethics. Essential Works of Foucault, 1954-1984*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1994), 256.

⁹⁹¹ Michel Foucault, "Politics and Ethics: An Interview," in *The Foucault Reader*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: Vintage, 2010), 377.

⁹⁹² Michel Foucault, *On the Government of the Living*, 79; 78.

government exercised within the domain of a state, Foucault instead maintains that the history of the “art of being governed” is simultaneously the counter-historical movement of resistance manifest in terms of the “art of not being governed.” In the following chapter, which should be taken as the center piece around which this study is based, I took Foucault’s fifth thesis on power from *The History of Sexuality* as the critical locus that reveals what I refer to as the primacy of resistance, and maintained that the logic of the primacy of resistance forms the conceptual nexus through which Foucault’s study of power, politics, and the history of the political can be understood in their specificity. With the primacy of resistance designating the conceptual key required for a full understanding of Foucault’s work, I argued that the condition of possibility of power relations and the field of the political turn upon the permanent potentiality of resistance, and further that this permanent potentiality of resistance is what allows for a relation of power to be transformed into a form of agonistic struggle. In chapter five I further maintained that a specific continuity between Foucault’s analytic of power and his theory of politics and the political as explored in *Society Must Be Defended* can be drawn through the primacy of resistance. Herein I argued that Foucault’s unorthodox reading of Hobbes, as well as the “historical-political” discourses of resistance that sustain this reading, offer a radically new principle of intelligibility from which to read the history of the political.⁹⁹³ By taking the condition of war instead of the advent of sovereign power as the historical motor of politics, Foucault reveals a fundamental caesura between the political as *archē* and the political as *agōn*, in which politics comes to designate an agonistic struggle or permanent war between the history of power exercised as techniques of government within a state, and the parallel yet heterogeneous counter-historical movements of resistance.

While Foucault’s works are traditionally read as contributing to an innovative and often controversial critical theory of how power relations function in society, as well as the distinct rationalities of government that sustain them, it has been my general contention throughout this project not only that Foucault’s respective studies of power, governmentality and politics all fundamentally turn upon a unique theory of resistance that forms the conceptual key from which his larger project is based, but also that

⁹⁹³ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 49.

Foucault must be read in terms of a philosopher of resistance as such. More specifically, I have not only sought to demonstrate how Foucault's studies of power, governmentality and politics all turn upon revealing the permanent potentiality of resistance amongst these relations, but also how the primary goal of Foucault's general project can be read as a critical attempt to unmask the primacy of resistance as such. In this regard, the overall goal of the previous chapters has been two-fold. By highlighting the importance Foucault attaches to the concept of resistance throughout his work, my intention has at once been to demonstrate how the primacy of resistance forms the critical locus from which Foucault bases his inquiries into power, politics, and governmentality, while simultaneously exploring how each of these inquiries ultimately turn upon elaborating a critical theory of resistance as the central component to Foucault's philosophy. Additionally, however, my intention has been to demonstrate how the primacy of resistance as broached by Foucault reveals an alternative basis from which the history of politics and the political can be interpreted anarchically—that is, without the first principle and logic of the *archē*. In this way, the logic of the primacy of resistance forms the basis of what I refer to as an anarchist hypothesis of the political in which the political as *archē* is unfounded by taking the primacy of resistance as the constituent component of politics, and from which the political can be redefined as a domain of permanent agonistic struggle.

While the previous chapters have sought to situate Foucault's work in relation to the history of political philosophy and anarchist thought, it is my contention in this final chapter that this anarchist hypothesis of the political which takes the primacy of resistance as its constituent component, also turns upon an ethics of revolt that animates and makes possible Foucault's analytics of power and politics. It is therefore necessary to turn toward some of his later works, thematics and key concepts not only in order to understand the full implications of how Foucault's theory of resistance corresponds and coincides with a particular theory of ethics, but more specifically how this inquiry into the question of ethics additionally reveals a vital dimension of his theory of resistance that cannot be ignored. It is widely recognized that Foucault's final works, particularly *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self*, as well as the final series of lectures given at the Collège De France in the period from 1979 to 1984, signify a direct change in focus

from questions pertaining to power and politics to those posed in relation to the field of ethics.⁹⁹⁴ The ways in which Foucault's later thought can be fundamentally distinguished from the themes and points of focus of his earlier works has led some to refer to this period as "Foucault's ethical turn."⁹⁹⁵ To be sure, scholars⁹⁹⁶ and biographers⁹⁹⁷ alike consistently argue that following the publication of *The History of Sexuality* in 1976, Foucault begins to rethink his work in terms of a shift from the general question of power to the ethical problematization of subjectivity and how human beings are constituted as subjects as such. As Simons acknowledges, during the final period of his work, "Foucault discerns ways in which people participate in their own subjectification by exercising power over themselves, tying themselves to scientific or moral definitions of who they are."⁹⁹⁸ Thus, as Simons concludes, Foucault "refers to this relationship to the self as ethics."⁹⁹⁹ Indeed, in the 1982 essay "The Subject and Power" Foucault retrospectively maintains that the problem of the subject has always been at the forefront of his works since the beginning. As Foucault recognizes in hindsight, the general objective of his collected works "has been to create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects," and furthermore that his works therefore correspond with "three modes of objectification that transform human beings into subjects."¹⁰⁰⁰ As we will see, similar to the ways in which Foucault maintains that

⁹⁹⁴ See: Lisa Downing, *The Cambridge Introduction to Foucault* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008), 87.

⁹⁹⁵ Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg, "Michel Foucault: An Ethical Politics of Care of the Self and Others," in *Political Philosophy in the 20th Century: Authors and Arguments*, ed. Catherine Zuchert (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 228.

⁹⁹⁶ See: Paul Rabinow, "Introduction" to Michel Foucault, *Ethics: Subjectivity and Truth*, ed. Paul Rabinow (New York: The New Press, 1994), xvii. Here Rabinow maintains that "over the next four years" following the publication of *The History of Sexuality* "Foucault carried out a major recasting and consolidation of his core conceptual tools." At stake for Rabinow is that it is crucial to understand the ways in which Foucault began to reconceive his theory of power in order to fully understand the questions posed in his later works. Thus Rabinow argues that "it is crucial to underline a central shift in in his views on power relations, for it situates the problems his later thought sought to address" (xvii).

⁹⁹⁷ David Macey, *Michel Foucault*, (London: Reaktion Books, 2004), 135.

⁹⁹⁸ Jon Simons, *Foucault and the Political*, 2.

⁹⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 2.

¹⁰⁰⁰ Michel Foucault, "Subject and Power," 326. As a retrospective inquiry pertaining to the ways in which his work can be distinguished by three different periods in relation to the question of how humans are made into subjects, Foucault provides a useful afterthought from which a certain continuity between the differing periods of his thought can be drawn. First, Foucault maintains that his early texts, particularly *The Order of Things* and *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, the goal of his work was to analyze the "objectivizing of the speaking subject" in relation to the discourses of the human sciences; second

power relations correspond with the primacy of resistance, the forms of power that take as their object the transformation of human beings into subjects directly correspond with a movement of desubjectification, a movement of resistance against the individualizing techniques of government. It is this movement of resistance as desubjectification that Foucault understands as the ethical component corresponding with a form of politics conceived as resistance.

For Foucault's readers and critics there has been some serious contention pertaining to how Foucault's ethical turn can be read not only in light of the three volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, but also more broadly in terms of his larger project.¹⁰⁰¹ While some critics and scholars argue that Foucault's turn toward the study of governmentality and eventually of the question of ethics employs an entirely new set of concepts, problems, and themes, and therefore that his ethical period constitutes a decisive break with his earlier thought,¹⁰⁰² others argue that Foucault maintains a specific continuity between the political and ethical axes of his thought,¹⁰⁰³ and further that each axis can be read as critically complementing the other. For some, the decisive break between the analytic of power and the turn toward the study of ethics is often attributed to Foucault's transition to the study of governmentality in the years following the publication of *The History of Sexuality*, wherein critics claim that Foucault ultimately

Foucault maintains that his inquiry into the question of power as posed in *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality* "studied the objectivizing of the subject" in terms of "dividing practices;" finally, Foucault maintains with respect to his current work in 1982 that he has sought to study "the way a human being turns him—or herself into a subject" (326-327). With this retrospective outline of his work, Foucault there writes that "it is not power, but the subject, that is the general theme of my research" (327).

¹⁰⁰¹ See: Lisa Downing, *The Cambridge Introduction to Foucault*, 87. Here Downing notes how "volumes two and three deviated from his original conception of how the completed *History* would look."

¹⁰⁰² See: Thomas Lemke, *Foucault, Governmentality, Critique*, 3. In this text, Lemke takes the turn toward the study of governmentality as the decisive turning point from which Foucault abandons his initial analytic of power and moves toward an engagement with inquiry into the intersection between subjectivity and ethics (3).

¹⁰⁰³ See: Colin Koopman, "The Formation and Self-Transformation of the Subject in Foucault's Ethics," in *A Companion to Foucault*, eds. Christopher Falzon, et al. (United Kingdom: Wiley-Blackwell Publications, 2013), 527-529. Despite orthodox interpretation of Foucault's ethical turn, Koopman here maintains that "there is no deep break between" the differing periods, and instead maintains that "Foucault's writings on ethics in antiquity pick up right where his prior writings on power and knowledge in modernity left off" (527). According to Koopman, this continuation between periods can be maintained in two ways: first as an "expanded historical inquiry" into how modern ethics emerges out of the problematization of previous forms of ethics, and secondly the problematization of the ethics of antiquity might constitute the basis for an ethical response to our own modern condition (527).

abandons his previous analytics of power, war, and politics.¹⁰⁰⁴ With note of Foucault's claim in the first lecture from *Society Must Be Defended* regarding how the "twin notions of "repression" and "war" have to be considerably modified and ultimately, perhaps, abandoned,"¹⁰⁰⁵ readers of Foucault maintain that he ultimately "managed to abandon the burdensome ballast of the war matrix."¹⁰⁰⁶ In his text, *Foucault, Governmentality and Critique*, Thomas Lemke designates *Society Must Be Defended* as a key turning point in which Foucault begins to radically change the trajectory of his work. Thus according to Lemke while "Foucault replaces the focus on legitimacy and consent in political theory by accentuating war and struggle" this model is itself replaced by the way in which "power relations for Foucault, have become governmentalized."¹⁰⁰⁷ Similarly, in the introduction to the English translation of *Society Must Be Defended* Arnold Davidson suggests that "by 1976, just after this course, Foucault had subtly but significantly modified his own attitude" not only regarding his analytic of power, but also his conception of war and politics.¹⁰⁰⁸ More critically, others have suggested that the turn toward the study of governmentality can be understood in terms of how Foucault ultimately fails to succeed in attempting a non-sovereign theory of power and politics. In this regard, Andrew Neal maintains that in the wake of his lectures on the questions of politics, war, and historical struggle Foucault "quickly subsumed into a different path," and consequently that he "does not succeed in cutting off the King's head."¹⁰⁰⁹

While it is true that Foucault began to focus on the general problematic of governmentality in the years following the 1976-1977 lectures, the theoretical break or disjuncture Lemke and others posit between the study of governmentality and his earlier analytics of power and politics is not entirely accurate. Hence, the claim that the turn to

¹⁰⁰⁴ See: Thomas Lemke, *Foucault, Governmentality, Critique*, 10-11.

¹⁰⁰⁵ Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended*, 17.

¹⁰⁰⁶ Beatrice Hansen, *Critique of Violence*, 147. Hansen invokes Foucault's later essay "The Subject and Power" in order to demonstrate how Foucault ultimately abandons the war analysis of power relations in favor of the study of governmentality. In this way, Hansen maintains that if "in *Society Must Be Defended*, he had focused on *power/war/struggle*, now [in "The Subject and Power"] his concern was with the constellation *power/governing* (153).

¹⁰⁰⁷ Thomas Lemke, *Foucault, Governmentality, Critique*, 11;31.

¹⁰⁰⁸ Arnold I. Davidson, introduction to Michel Foucault, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the Collège De France, 1975-1976*, trans. David Macey (New York: Picador, 2003), xviii.

¹⁰⁰⁹ Andrew W. Neal, "Cutting Off the King's Head: Foucault's *Society Must Be Defended* and the Problem of Sovereignty," 379, 380.

the study of governmentality ought to be understood as turning point in which Foucault abandons his previous studies in favor of completely new project has been equally discounted by several theorists. While Kelly acknowledges that “Foucault drops his talk of war by around 1978,” he further concludes “that there is no break” in the form of a total abandonment of previous ideas, concepts, and points of focus.¹⁰¹⁰ Along this trajectory, other critics have sought to establish a continuity between Foucault’s work on power and politics through the 1970’s and his study of ethics in the early 1980’s, and have more correctly explored how the two periods are not exclusive, but rather mutually complementary of one another. Rather than asserting a fundamental distinction between the analytic of politics and the study of ethics, Milchman and Rosenberg have therefore suggested that we might read the later works in view of how “Foucault came to see politics as an ethics.”¹⁰¹¹ Against the claim that Foucault’s inquiry into the question of ethics turns him away from the study of politics, the ethical turn can therefore be read “in the direction of a reconceptualization of politics as an ethical politics.”¹⁰¹² Expanding upon the idea that Foucault’s turn toward ethics itself turns upon the elaboration of a form of politics conceived as ethics, Kelly reads the ethical turn as a vital attempt to understand what types of ethical practices might coincide with Foucault’s theory of power, politics, and the political, and argues that “ethics is for Foucault a logical outcome of his political thought.”¹⁰¹³ As a form of ethics that corresponds with his theory of politics, Colin Koopman suggests that Foucault’s late writings ought to be understood as a distinctly unique way to think through the actual “possibility of the future transformation of the subject” instead of how the subject is formed through relations of power.¹⁰¹⁴ Indeed if, as I have argued in the three previous chapters, that Foucault’s analytics of power and politics are inseparable from the primacy and permanent presence

¹⁰¹⁰ Mark G. Kelly, *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, 55; 57. Taking Lemke’s argument as his critical foil, Kelly argues persuasively that a specific continuity can be found between Foucault’s work in *Society Must Be Defended* and his subsequent study of governmentality and the exercise of power as government. Although Kelly acknowledges that Foucault eventually “goes on largely to abandon the analogy” of war, he explains that “the metaphor that in Foucault’s later works largely displaces that of war is that of the *game*” (58, original emphasis).

¹⁰¹¹ Alan Milchman and Alan Rosenberg, “Michel Foucault: An Ethical Politics of Care of the Self and Others,” 228.

¹⁰¹² Ibid, 228.

¹⁰¹³ See: Mark G. Kelly, *The Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, 157.

¹⁰¹⁴ Colin Koopman, “The Formation and Self-Transformation of the Subject in Foucault’s Ethics,” 526.

of resistance as the constituent component that redefines the political as a field of agonistic struggle, then following Kelly and Koopman's readings we can suggest that the turn toward ethics can be understood as both a "logical outcome" to his political theory as well as a critical attempt to theorize what types of ethical praxis might coincide with his theory of politics as resistance.

Although it has been noted that readers of Foucault ought to be careful when he retrospectively reads his early texts and problematics in view of his current projects,¹⁰¹⁵ if we follow the claim made in "The Subject and Power" wherein Foucault maintains that the goal of his general project has been to trace the ways in which humans are made into subjects, it is my contention, then, that the ethical turn can be read as a critical attempt to expand upon his theory of resistance and propose an ethics of resistance and possible transformation against the forms of subjectification traced in the works leading to his final projects. Rather than taking the turn toward the study of governmentality as found in *Security, Territory, Population* in terms of a conceptual bridge through which Foucault abandons his analytics of power and politics in favor of the study of governmentality and ethics, this why Arnold Davidson in his introduction to the English translation of these same lectures argues that the key concept "that allows us to link together the political and ethical axes of Foucault's thought" is not found in the problematic of governmentality, but rather arises in the practices of revolt, or forms of "counter-conduct" directed against the exercise of government.¹⁰¹⁶ Affirming that Foucault's theory of ethics ultimately turns upon a radical transformation of the subject, others have more directly outlined how a specific continuity between his political and ethical periods can be maintained in terms of an expanded discussion of the question of resistance Foucault poses throughout his work. In this regard, Johanna Oksala argues that "Foucault's later work on ethics is an inquiry into resistance."¹⁰¹⁷ Furthermore, while Bernauer and Mahon maintain that what is ultimately at stake in his turn toward the study of ethics is how "Foucault called for a clear attitude of protest, of ethical rejection that could itself become a political force,"¹⁰¹⁸

¹⁰¹⁵ See: Todd May, *The Philosophy of Foucault* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 104.

¹⁰¹⁶ Arnold Davidson, "In Praise of Counter-Conduct," 26.

¹⁰¹⁷ Johanna Oksala, *Foucault on Freedom*, 167-168.

¹⁰¹⁸ James Bernauer and Michael Mahon, "Foucault's Ethical Imagination," in *The Cambridge Companion to Foucault*, ed. Gary Cutting (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 153.

Simons argues that Foucault's search for a form of ethics that can be transformed into a political force led him to develop "an ethic of permanent resistance."¹⁰¹⁹ Thus while Foucault understands the history of the political as a history made visible by the primacy of resistance, and further that a conception of politics as resistance is what allows relations of power to be both confronted and transformed, a continuity can be drawn between Foucault's conceptions of politics and ethics in that the latter is an expanded historical inquiry into which types of ethical practices might be invoked in order resist the techniques of governmentality outlined in his later works.

In light of the way in which a continuity between the political and ethical axes of Foucault's thought can be drawn through the concept of resistance, it is at once my contention in this chapter that there is an explicitly political dimension of Foucault's theory of ethics that itself turns upon the question of resistance, as well as how this turn toward the study of ethics reveals an important way through which the relation between politics and resistance can be rethought in terms of a critically resistant ethos, not as a prescriptive set of moral codes and normative rules, but ethos defined as a mode of resistance to the exercise of power as government. More specifically, it is my claim that Foucault's ethical turn ought to be understood as an attempt to locate a continuity between a form of ethics that animates his theory of resistance, and a form of politics as resistance that coincides with a radical, permanent ethics of revolt, a distinct way of being in the world through resistance—that is, specific art of not being governed. To do so, I first turn to the lecture series titled *Security, Territory, Population*, particularly the eighth lecture, in order to demonstrate how a unique bridge between the study of politics and the turn toward ethics can be maintained through what Foucault designates as movements of "counter-conduct," "revolts of conduct," or insurrections of conduct."¹⁰²⁰ While the importance of *Security, Territory, Population* is often attributed to the introduction of the concept and study of governmentality, it is my contention here that the majority of Foucault's critics have neglected to notice how Foucault's outline pertaining to the ways in which power is exercised as a technique of government is fundamentally paired with a historical outline of movements of resistance against these same practices. Although

¹⁰¹⁹ Jon Simons, *Foucault and the Political*, 87.

¹⁰²⁰ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 191-216.

Davidson has pointed toward a certain correspondence between the concept of resistance and what Foucault refers to as “counter-conduct,” it is my contention here that what is at stake in this relation lies in the way in which Foucault begins to redefine politics as a specific ethics of resistance to the exercise of governmentality.¹⁰²¹ As we will see, however, while several critics have asserted a specific continuity between the turn toward governmentality and the study of ethics, it is my argument that the turn toward ethics can more correctly be understood in relation to Foucault’s theory of resistance to governmentality, and thus a continuation of his study of power and politics. Indeed, with the notion of “counter-conduct” Foucault enhances his theory of politics by adding a distinct ethical component to the concept and practice of resistance in which these movements of revolt are at once characterized by a form of resistance directed against the exercise of government as well as a movement whose objective is not simply to counter the techniques of governmentality, but also to carve out a radical space of freedom in which one is able to form one’s own subjectivity autonomously as an art of not being governed.

After outlining the ways in which Foucault’s analysis of the “revolts of conduct” against governmentality ultimately reveals a fundamental redefinition of politics from the perspective of resistance, I then trace how the concept of “counter-conduct” also reveals an ethical dimension of the politics of resistance. Herein I invoke the notion of “counter-conduct” as a key referent from which Foucault begins to problematize the question of politics as ethics, as well as the conceptual basis that animates other concepts vital to his study of ethics such as “the care of the self” and “askēsis.” Ultimately at stake here is to demonstrate how Foucault begins to rethink ethics in terms of a practice of resistance, a permanent ethos of revolt against the logic of governmentality. Expanding upon the idea that the politics of resistance appears in Foucault’s work as the conceptual basis required

¹⁰²¹ See: Arnold Davidson, “In Praise of Counter-Conduct), 26-28. Herein Davidson adequately outlines a specific connection between Foucault’s use of the term “resistance” and the practice of “counter-conduct,” and further that this connection helps in moving between Foucault’s writings on politics and his later writings on ethics. Nevertheless, while Davidson concludes that “political and ethically, counter-conduct is the invention of a new philosophical concept,” he nevertheless tends to gloss over the question of politics, focusing instead on how the concept of “counter-conduct” more directly develops in tandem with the question of ethics (39). It is my contention, however, that with the notion of “counter-conduct” Foucault does not bracket the question of politics in favor of ethics, but rather that the concept of “counter-conduct” renders the question of politics more acute for Foucault.

for a critical inquiry into the problematic of ethics, in the final section, I situate Foucault's work on the ethical politics of resistance in relation to anarchist thought in order to explore how the anarchist hypothesis of the political I have been tracing simultaneously corresponds with an ethics of revolt that animates this conception of the political. Staging an intersection between two of Foucault's later works—"The Subject and Power" and an interview titled "The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom"—I not only argue that anarchism forms a key referent from which Foucault begins to rethink ethics as a practice of resistance, but also how these two texts develop a unique definition of resistance in which the radical ethos of struggle against the techniques of government is simultaneously paired with the affirmation of autonomous, ungovernable forms of subjectivity. By placing Foucault's ethics of revolt in dialogue with anarchist thought, it is my contention that it is possible to rethink an anarchist politics of struggle not simply in terms of a revolutionary project determined by the teleological goal of a future classless and stateless society. Rather than taking the project of social revolution as the paradigmatic form of anarchist struggle, I suggest that an anarchist theory of resistance might be rethought as a distinct form of agonistic ethos, an insurrectionary politics of revolt in which what is at stake in resistance is neither a struggle with or over state power, but instead a struggle at once directed against the forms of governable subjectivities that connect individuals to the state, as well as a struggle for the invention of autonomous forms-of-life, a struggle that begins with anarchy instead of ending with it.

6.1 Counter-Conduct: Politics as Resistance to Governmentality

*To be GOVERNED is to be kept in sight, inspected, spied upon, directed, law-driven, numbered, enrolled, indoctrinated, preached at, controlled, estimated, valued, censured, commanded, by creatures who have neither the right, nor the wisdom, nor the virtue to do so...To be GOVERNED is to be at every operation, at every transaction, noted, registered, enrolled, taxed, stamped, measured, numbered, assessed, licensed, authorized, admonished, forbidden, reformed, corrected, punished...then, at the slightest resistance...to be repressed, fined, despised, harassed, tracked, abused, clubbed, disarmed, choked, imprisoned, judged, condemned, shot, deported, sacrificed, sold, betrayed...That is government; that is its justice; that is its morality.*¹⁰²²

¹⁰²² Pierre-Joseph Proudhon, "General Idea of the Revolution in the Nineteenth Century," in *Property is Theft: A Pierre-Joseph Proudhon Anthology*, ed. Lain McKay (California: AK Press, 2011), 598.

--Pierre-Joseph Proudhon

*Politics is no more or less than that which is born with resistance to governmentality, the first uprising, the first revolt.*¹⁰²³

--Michel Foucault

Following the publication of *The History of Sexuality* in 1976, Foucault abandoned what he initially proposed as a six volume set of texts connected through the theme of sexuality, and quickly set about rethinking the general focus and trajectory of his project.¹⁰²⁴ Although Foucault produced no new texts aside from several essays, interviews and lectures for the following eight years, the fundamental revision of his initial project ultimately resulted in the second and third volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, respectively titled *The Use of Pleasures* and *The Care of the Self*, both published in 1984. While a fourth volume titled *The Confessions of the Flesh* was nearly finished before Foucault's death, it has never been published.¹⁰²⁵ For many of Foucault's critics it is not necessarily the eight-year gap separating the publication of volume one from volumes two and three that is difficult to explain, but rather the change in theme from the analysis of the ways in which relations of power intersect with modern discourses of sexuality to an analytic of the "practices of the self" through which one constitutes oneself as a subject of sexual conduct.¹⁰²⁶ Indeed, although in the introduction to *The Use of Pleasure* Foucault reintroduces the aim of his project and further establishes a new set of concepts and themes from which the later volumes can be distinguished from the first, critics have often pointed out how the transition from the analytic of power to the ethical dimension of sexuality and the formation of the subject seemed "sudden and inexplicable."¹⁰²⁷ Furthermore, as Davidson notes, Foucault's

¹⁰²³ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 217, n.5.

¹⁰²⁴ The back cover of the first volume of *The History of Sexuality*, announced five forthcoming volumes that were to complete Foucault's study of the history of sexuality. Following the publication of the first volume, the projected titles of the five texts to come were tentatively ordered and titled as follows: *The Flesh and the Body* (vol. 2), *The Children's Crusade* (vol. 3), *Woman, Mother, Hysteric* (vol. 4), *Perverts* (vol. 5), and *Populations and Races* (vol. 6).

¹⁰²⁵ See: Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 12. Here, after outlining the changing focus of his new project, Foucault maintains that *The Confessions of the Flesh* would effectively complete his historical study of sexuality.

¹⁰²⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure. The History of Sexuality*, volume 2, trans. Robert Hurley (New York: Vintage, 1985), 13.

¹⁰²⁷ Arnold Davidson, "Introduction" to Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, xviii.

passage from the political to the ethical is even more complex given how “this displacement of focus had consequences far beyond the specific domain of the history of sexuality.”¹⁰²⁸ Indeed, Foucault’s turn toward the study of ethics is by no means limited to the final two volumes of *The History of Sexuality*, and several essays, interviews, and lectures between 1977 and 1984 situate the question of ethics in relation to other concepts of interest to Foucault such as resistance, power, politics, governmentality, and the relation between the subject and truth.

After the wide-spread publication of Foucault’s lecture’s given at the Collège De France, scholars typically pinpoint *Security, Territory, Population* as a key turning point from which Foucault begins to transition from the analytics of power and politics to the general problematic of governmentality.¹⁰²⁹ Thus, according to Oksala “government becomes Foucault’s preferred term for power, while governmentality functions as his main theoretical tool for analyzing its rationality, techniques, and procedures in modernity.”¹⁰³⁰ While acknowledging that Foucault does indeed valorize the term “government” over the term “power,” Lemke, however, understands the turn toward governmentality as representing a distinct break and disqualification of Foucault’s model of power, politics, and war as outlined in *Society Must Be Defended*.¹⁰³¹ For Lemke, by abandoning the analytic of power and the theory of politics as war, the term “governmentality” comes to represent the hidden link between the political and ethical axes of Foucault’s thought insofar as it mediates between the “genealogy of the state” outlined in the fourth lecture of *Security, Territory, Population* and the genealogy of the subject occupying Foucault’s thought in the following years.¹⁰³² While Lemke is correct that with the turn toward government Foucault indeed navigates between the study of politics and the question of ethics, the way in which he posits a distinct break between the analytic of power and study of governmentality rationality fundamentally neglects, as we

¹⁰²⁸ Ibid, xviii.

¹⁰²⁹ See: Colin Gordon, “Governmental Rationality: An Introduction,” 1. Also see: Johanna Oksala, “From Biopower to Governmentality,” 323.

¹⁰³⁰ Ibid, 325.

¹⁰³¹ Thomas Lemke, *Foucault, Governmentality, Critique* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 3.

¹⁰³² Ibid, 17. Here, Lemke maintains that governmentality mediates between the political and ethical axes of Foucault’s thought since he reconstructs the history of government from a “double perspective of state formation and subjectivation.”

will see, how the analysis of governmentality significantly continues and expands upon the models of power and politics, found in the first volume of *The History of Sexuality* and *Society Must Be Defended*.¹⁰³³ More specifically, Lemke fails to consider the ways in which Foucault's theory of resistance, which is inherently tied to his theory of power, directly reappears and coincides with the notion of governmentality, and further that it is this reappearance of the question of resistance that allows for a specific continuity to be established between the political and ethical periods of Foucault's work. In this respect, Davidson has more correctly outlined how the turn toward the study of governmentality is fundamentally paired with the corresponding movements of resistance as "counter-conduct," and further that it is with these movements of "counter-conduct" and not simply that of governmentality from which a "conceptual hinge" that links together the political and ethical periods of Foucault's thought can be found.¹⁰³⁴

To fully understand how the political and ethical axes of Foucault's thought can be connected, it is first necessary to briefly outline what Foucault refers to as "governmentality" in order to demonstrate how the study of government corresponds, according to Foucault, with both a politics and ethics of revolt. Foucault's concept and study of governmentality first emerges in the fourth lecture of *Security, Territory, Population*, and is progressively developed throughout the remaining lectures of this series, and again in the following 1978 to 1979 lectures collected as *The Birth of Biopolitics*. On Foucault's study of the problem of governmentality in these lectures, Gordon has maintained that "Foucault understood the term 'government' in both a wide and narrow sense."¹⁰³⁵ Similarly, Senellart argues that Foucault's use of the term governmentality "progressively shifts from a precise, historically determinate sense, to a more general and abstract meaning."¹⁰³⁶ In the narrow and precise sense, Foucault first

¹⁰³³ Particularly problematic in Lemke's thinking lies in the way in which he neither recognizes the inherent political dimensions of Foucault's analytic of power, nor engages with the obvious connections Foucault makes between his notions of power, politics, and government; indeed, for Lemke the turn toward the study of government constitutes the political move for Foucault, whereas his previous work comes to represent a theory of power divorced from the question of politics. Even more troubling is how Lemke neglects to consider the ways in which Foucault's theory of resistance, which is fundamentally tied to his concept of power, reappears in the study of governmentality.

¹⁰³⁴ Arnold Davidson, "In Praise of Counter-Conduct," 26.

¹⁰³⁵ Colin Gordon, "Governmental Rationality: An Introduction," 2.

¹⁰³⁶ Michel Senellart, "Course Context," in Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2007), 387-388

maintains that the term governmentality at once designates the forms of rationality and techniques of government that correspond with the emergence of the modern state. In this sense, governmentality refers to the “actual definition of the state, of what we would call...the political form of government.”¹⁰³⁷ More generally, however, Foucault additionally invokes the term governmentality to describe a specific form of power distinct from the government of the modern administrative state, in which the techniques of government come to refer to “the way in which one conducts the conduct of men.”¹⁰³⁸ As a technique of government that conducts, or manages, the conduct of others, Foucault traces the history of governmentality to what he refers to as “pastoral power,” or the techniques of individualizing power specifically oriented at managing the conduct of others.¹⁰³⁹ Yet, in *Security, Territory, Population*, Foucault adds a third way in which the term governmentality can be defined. “Finally, by governmentality,” Foucault further clarifies that “we should understand the process, or rather, the result of the process by which the state of justice of the Middle Ages became the administrative state in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries and was gradually governmentalized.”¹⁰⁴⁰ As Foucault reiterates elsewhere, the inquiry into the problem of government not only designates the intersection between “the state” as the “political form of a centralized and centralizing power” and the “pastorate...individualizing power,” but more importantly “how this pastorate happened to combine with it opposite, the state.”¹⁰⁴¹ Although these alternate definitions might initially appear disparate, Foucault is clear that they together form a single unique rationality— what is referred to elsewhere in Latin as “omnes et singulatim” (all and each)—in which what is at stake in the term governmentality is not only how “the state has been...one of the most redoubtable, forms of human government,” but also how the state combines with pastoral power in such a way that its logic can be defined as “both individualizing and totalitarian.”¹⁰⁴² As we will see, this political rationality specific to governmentality is not only key for understanding how

¹⁰³⁷ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 115.

¹⁰³⁸ Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics. Lectures at the Collège de France 1978-1979*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 186.

¹⁰³⁹ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 115.

¹⁰⁴⁰ Ibid, 108-109.

¹⁰⁴¹ Michel Foucault, “Omnes Et Singulatim: Towards a Critique of Political Reason,” 300.

¹⁰⁴² Ibid, 325.

politics is traditionally manifest as a logic of the *archē*, but also the question of governmentality as such significantly modifies the stakes and practices of resistance exercised as an ethics of revolt.

In chapter one, I extensively outlined two key paradigms of Western politics—the Aristotelian notion of *oikonomia* in which politics assumes the form of a government of men and Schmitt’s theory of the political in which the domain of the political is reduced to the sovereign power of a state—and maintained that with these two paradigms the term politics tends to designate the techniques of government as exercised within the domain of the state. It is now clear that what Foucault outlines as the historical logic, rationality, and practices of governmentality, a unique term that describes the ways in which the history of government comes to coincide with the modern state and assumes the form of an *oikonomia*, can be understood within this context. At once an individualizing and totalizing form of power, what is ultimately at stake in the term governmentality for Foucault “is not then the state’s takeover of society, so much as...the governmentalization of the state.”¹⁰⁴³ When the individualizing techniques of pastoral power combine with the centralizing techniques of the state, the paradigmatic form politics assumes in the West is therefore, according to Foucault, “the political government of men.”¹⁰⁴⁴ Yet, the importance of Foucault’s work in *Security, Territory, Population* lies not simply in the genealogy of this “political government of men,” but rather in the direct correlation he establishes between the governmentalization of the state and the counter-historical movements of resistance parallel to the phenomenon of governmentality. Thus, the “governmentalization of the state is a particularly contorted phenomenon” according to Foucault, since “the techniques of government have really become the only political stake and the only real space of political struggle and contestation.”¹⁰⁴⁵ In other words, when pastoral power becomes governmentalized within the domain of the state and assumes the political government of others, what is at stake and contested in political struggle is not what Foucault refers to here as the “privileged position” of the state, “the absolutely essential...target to be attacked,” but rather the specific techniques, tactics,

¹⁰⁴³ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 109.

¹⁰⁴⁴ *Ibid*, 227.

¹⁰⁴⁵ *Ibid*, 109.

and exercises of government.¹⁰⁴⁶ Indeed, herein lies the key for Foucault: it is not that the state either disappears from or is irrelevant to the forms of struggle and resistance to governmentality, but rather that “the survival and limits of the state should be understood on the basis of the general tactics of governmentality.”¹⁰⁴⁷ Ultimately at stake for Foucault is that the governmentalization of the state historically coincides with new forms of struggle and resistance specifically directed at the techniques of government, and furthermore that these forms of resistance directed at the exercise of governmentality are, in fact, what allow for the state to be contested and possibly overturned. It is this reinvention of the logic and tactics of political struggle and resistance that designates the most significant and compelling parts of *Security, Territory, Population*. As is often the case in several of his other works, Foucault here frames his inquiry into the study of governmentality in terms of a critical theory of resistance. “Consequently,” Foucault therefore concludes in “Omnes et Singulatim:”

those who resist or rebel against a form of power cannot merely be content to denounce violence or criticize an institution...What has to be questioned is the form of rationality at stake...Its inevitable effects are both individualization and totalization. Liberation can come from attacking not just one of these two effects but political rationality’s very roots.¹⁰⁴⁸

It is at the intersection between the individualizing techniques of government and the totalizing aspects of the state that Foucault ultimately begins to rethink, as we will see, the praxis of resistance as an ethic of revolt. To be sure, rather than a revolutionary overthrow of state power, it is clear in the passage above that Foucault’s critically couples the study of governmentality with a fundamental retheorization of the stakes of resistance.

While the term governmentality is used by Foucault in the wider sense to refer to the governmentalization of the state, he also invokes the concept in reference to a specific form of power that takes the management and government of human conduct as its principal domain. It is necessary to quickly outline the form of power specific to the

¹⁰⁴⁶ Ibid, 109.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Ibid, 109.

¹⁰⁴⁸ Michel Foucault, “Omnes Et Singulatim: Towards a Critique of Political Reason,” 324-325.

logic of government in order to full understand how *Security, Territory, Population* fundamentally turns upon a unique theory of resistance exercised against the logic and practices of government, as oikonomia. Although in this text Foucault acknowledges that the term “oikonomia” has a history that harkens back to Aristotle, his notion of governmentality is to be critically distinguished from the former insofar as the concept and practice of oikonomia “takes on a completely different dimension and a completely different field of references with the pastorate.”¹⁰⁴⁹ While Foucault primarily focuses on how the notion of pastoral power develops throughout the sixteenth century, he further traces the history of the pastorate to the Greek expression “*oikonomia psuchōn*” translated as “the economy of souls,” and later from the Latin phrase “*regimen animarum*,” or the “government or regimen of souls” (original emphasis).¹⁰⁵⁰ While Aristotle’s use of the term oikonomia is often translated as an administration or management of a household, at stake for Foucault is how the notion of an “*oikonomia psuchōn*” adds a crucial dimension to the Aristotelian notion of politics as government. According to Foucault, the notion of an “*oikonomia psuchōn*” adds to Aristotle’s definition inasmuch as it directly refers the how this “political government of men” is understood as a form of power that at once takes the conduct of human beings as the object in which the techniques of government are directed. Indeed, Foucault proposes the term “conduct” as the most adequate translation of “*oikonomia psuchōn*” since it indicates two ideas essential to the notion of governmentality. “Conduct,” Foucault writes:

is the activity of conducting (*conduire*), of conduction (*la conduction*) if you like, but it is equally the way in which one conducts oneself (*se conduit*), lets oneself be conducted (*se laisse conduire*), is conducted (*est conduit*), and finally, in which one behaves (*se comporter*) as an effect of conduct (*une conduit*) as the action of conducting or of conduction.¹⁰⁵¹

Foucault’s choice in translating “*oikonomia psuchōn*” as an activity of conducting is set in order to pinpoint how government is exercised at once as the technique of conducting

¹⁰⁴⁹ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 192.

¹⁰⁵⁰ Ibid, 192.

¹⁰⁵¹ Ibid, 193.

the conduct of others, as well as a relation to the self in which one is conducted by others or by oneself, and finally the correlative form of behavior to conducting oneself or being conducted by others. When Foucault speaks of the individualizing techniques of governmentality, he is referring to the form of power that takes as its object the conduct of others—that is, the task of government is the direction and management of conduct.

After distinguishing the form of power exercised as government in terms of the activity of conducting and of conduction, Foucault nevertheless quickly turns to the question of resistance. Indeed, it is around the question of resistance that Foucault frames his critical inquiry into the question of governmentality. This “[t]ransition from the pastoral of souls to the political government of men,” Foucault therefore argues, “should be situated in [the] context of resistances, revolts and insurrections of conduct.”¹⁰⁵² Insofar as the “political government of men” designates the forms of power that take the conduct of others as its focal point, then what is first at stake for Foucault in the eight lecture of *Security, Territory, Population* is to outline the specificity of the correlative forms of resistance manifest against and in response to the exercise of government as such. As Foucault importantly maintains, then, we can read the history of governmentality in the following way:

from the end of the seventeenth and the beginning of the eighteenth century, generally speaking I think that inasmuch as many pastoral functions were taken up in the exercise of governmentality, and inasmuch as government also begins to want to take responsibility for people’s conduct, to conduct people, then from then on we see revolts of conduct arising less from the religious institution and much more from political institutions. Conflicts of conduct will occur on the borders and edge of the political institution.¹⁰⁵³

In its most basic form, what is at stake here is how the history of governmentality is inseparable from the corresponding movements of resistance, or “revolts of conduct.” Furthermore, in a manner analogous to Foucault’s notion of “critique” which, as we saw in chapter three, begins with the premise that the art of governing is always parallel to the “art of not being governed,” the analysis of the fundamental struggle between conduct

¹⁰⁵² Ibid, 228.

¹⁰⁵³ Ibid, 197-198.

and counter-conduct historically specifies a key example from which this logic again appears. The history of government for Foucault is parallel to its own counter-history manifest in the movements of resistance against the exercise of government—that is, governmentality is itself the history of “conflicts of conduct,” or the struggle between the art of governing and the art of not being governed. In this regard, despite the ways in which the significance of these counter-historical “revolts of conduct” are traditionally overshadowed by the study of governmentality, the importance of Foucault’s work in *Security, Territory, Population* arises not only in his analysis of the fundamental struggle between the government of conduct and the movements of resistance outlined in terms of “revolts of conduct,” but also how these movements of counter-conduct open up a vital understanding of the how politics of resistance can be conceived and practiced.

Taking this analysis of the forms of resistance against the techniques of governmentality as the basic framework and critical context from which Foucault situates his study of the governmentalization of the state, it is my contention that the analysis of the revolts of conduct corresponding to the governmentalization of the state and the coinciding techniques of government ought to be understood as an extended critical discussion of what I have referred to as the primacy of resistance, not only in terms of the analytic of power from *The History of Sexuality*, but also the analytic of politics from *Society Must Be Defended* in which the political is redefined as a field of agonistic struggle between those who govern and those who are governed. Thus, after briefly outlining the passive and active forms of resistance, or “great external blockages,” directed against pastoral power, Foucault claims that his goal in the March 1 lecture of *Security, Territory, Population* is more correctly to “identify some of the points of resistance, some of the forms of attack and counter-attack that appeared *within* the field of the pastorate” (original emphasis).¹⁰⁵⁴ Indeed, it is in reference to these counter-attacks against pastoral power that Foucault’s work in *Security, Territory, Population* is set to explore how the “specificity of refusal, revolts, and forms of resistance of conduct corresponded with the historical specificity of the pastorate.”¹⁰⁵⁵ Foucault’s emphasis here regarding how these points of resistance directly appear *within* the field of pastoral

¹⁰⁵⁴ Ibid, 194.

¹⁰⁵⁵ Ibid, 195.

power, makes reference to the latter component of the fifth thesis from the *History of Sexuality* wherein resistance is shown to exist in a position of non-exteriority with respect to power. Indeed, it is the logic of the primacy of resistance that Foucault takes as a key referent from which the notion of “counter-conduct” can be conceived. Furthermore, there are some striking similarities in both form and content between Foucault’s thesis—“where there is power, there is resistance”—and the following passage from *Security, Territory, Population*:

Just as there have been forms of resistance to power as the exercise of political sovereignty, and just as there have been other, equally intentional forms of resistance or refusal that were directed at power in the form of economic exploitation, have there not been forms of resistance to conducting?¹⁰⁵⁶

Consistent with the logic of his fifth thesis, Foucault maintains a distinct correlation between power/resistance, and insists that resistance as “counter-conduct” is primary with power exercised as government. Here, Foucault again insists that resistance is not only coextensive with, yet irreducible to, the exercises of power as sovereignty, as economic exploitation, and as government, but also that these forms of power necessarily exist in relation to the permanence of resistance within the domain in which they operate. This permanent and inseparable relation between power and resistance is what Foucault refers to as the “relational character of power” in which the existence of power relations depends upon the “multiplicity of points of resistance.”¹⁰⁵⁷ Just as Foucault’s analytic of power fundamentally turns upon the primacy of resistance, *Security, Territory, Population* importantly extends this analytic into the study of governmentality in such a way that “there is an immediate and founding correlation between conduct and counter-conduct.”¹⁰⁵⁸ In other words, there is an “immediate and founding correlation” according to Foucault, between the history of government and the counter-history of resistance.

As outlined above, Foucault’s fifth thesis reappears in the context of the study of governmentality. Power exercised as government reveals a correlative form of resistance which Foucault designates in *Security, Territory, Population* as “revolts of conduct.”

¹⁰⁵⁶ Ibid, 195.

¹⁰⁵⁷ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 95.

¹⁰⁵⁸ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 196.

Insofar as “the pastorate is a highly specific form of power with the object of conducting men,” then the history of power as government is, according to Foucault, simultaneously the counter-history pertaining to how “specific movements of resistance and insubordination appeared in correlation with this that could be called specific revolts of conduct.”¹⁰⁵⁹ In other words, Foucault’s point is to demonstrate how these “revolts of conduct” are primary with respect to power exercised as government. Because the power/resistance dynamic reappears in *Security, Territory, Population* as a key component corresponding to the study of governmentality, what Foucault refers to as “revolts of conduct” can be understood as adding a historical example in which the logic of the primacy of resistance and the corresponding agonistic conception of politics is, in fact, manifest as such. In this regard, while the previous chapter established a certain continuity between Foucault’s analytic of power/resistance and *Society Must Be Defended* in terms of a critical caesura between the political as archē and the political as agōn, a further continuity can be established with *Security, Territory, Population* in terms of how the inseparable nexus between power exercised as government and the counter-movements of resistances of conduct exemplifies a key way through which the political as agōn develops. Indeed, as Foucault suggests there is a certain use-value in invoking the term “counter-conduct” to describe the forms of resistance against governmentality. “Using the word counter-conduct,” Foucault argues, reveals a unique principle of intelligibility from which to analyze “the way in which someone actually acts in the very general field of politics”—that is, the term counter-conduct unmasks the existence of an agonistic form of politics of resistance.¹⁰⁶⁰

Perhaps even more important, however, than the inseparable relation Foucault establishes between the analysis of governmentality and the corresponding forms of resistance as counter-conduct is how this founding correlation ultimately hinges upon a redefinition of politics conceived from the perspective of resistance to the forms of power exercised as government. In this regard, it is necessary to turn to the untitled manuscripts on governmentality cited by Michel Senellart in the “Course Context” following the

¹⁰⁵⁹ Ibid, 194.

¹⁰⁶⁰ Ibid, 202.

English translation of *Security, Territory, Population*.¹⁰⁶¹ In the manuscripts on governmentality cited by Senellart, Foucault juxtaposes two critical positions pertaining to how the domain of the political has been traditionally conceived in the context of governmentality and the governmentalization of the state. First, Foucault claims that the “analysis of governmentality...generally implies that everything is political,” and further suggests that this “expression is traditionally given two meanings” through which the political as governmentality is reduced to a theory of the state.¹⁰⁶² Foucault summarizes these two positions as follows:

[1.] Politics is defined by the whole sphere of state intervention, (...). To say that everything is political amounts to saying that, directly or indirectly, the state is everywhere. [2.] Politics is defined by the omnipresence of a struggle between two adversaries (...). This other definition is that of K. (sic) Schmitt.¹⁰⁶³

In the first tradition, Foucault suggests that the analysis of governmentality is often reduced to the domain of the state whereby the term politics is rendered synonymous with the exercise of state power. In the second, however, Foucault makes a rare reference to Schmitt’s theory of the political,¹⁰⁶⁴ wherein the terms of the political are defined “by the existence of adversaries” determined within the sovereign authority of the state.¹⁰⁶⁵

Refusing these two traditional paradigms on the ground that both theories presuppose an originary nexus between the primacy of the state and the domain of the political, Foucault reveals a third way from which to read the history of governmentality and the corresponding field of the political neither simply in terms of the state, nor the exercise of government, but rather from the perspective of resistance to power. Since the expression “everything is political” traditionally locates the question of politics within the domain of the state, Foucault fundamentally reverses this claim and suggests that:

¹⁰⁶¹ For information on these manuscripts, see: Michel Senellart, “Course Context,” 389-390; 400 n. 134. What Senellart refers to as the “Manuscript on Governmentality,” is an untitled collection of eleven manuscript pages inserted between February 21 and March 7 lectures of *The Birth of Biopolitics*.

¹⁰⁶² Michel Foucault, “Manuscript on Governmentality,” cited above, n. 55 (390).

¹⁰⁶³ Ibid, 390.

¹⁰⁶⁴ See: Michel Senellart, “Course Context,” 390. Here Senellart claims that the “Manuscripts on Governmentality,” designates the only text in which Foucault explicitly references Carl Schmitt’s theory of the political.

¹⁰⁶⁵ Ibid, 390.

it is a question of saying rather nothing is political, everything can be politicized, everything may become political. Politics is no more or less than that which is born with resistance to governmentality. The first uprising, the first confrontation.¹⁰⁶⁶

Against the orthodox understanding of the political as archē, Foucault argues that politics can be redefined neither in terms of the state nor state power, but as “that which is born with resistance to governmentality.” In other words, *politics emerges as a practice of resistance*. Yet, without the comparison draws between his own model of the political and the previous two traditional theories, the precise meaning of Foucault’s claim might be difficult to ascertain. First, Foucault’s claim that “nothing is political” denies the state’s claim of primacy—that is, if the domain of the political is traditionally reduced to the state as the decisive entity of politics, Foucault’s counter-claim, “nothing is political” fundamentally refuses this artifice. However, Foucault’s second claim pertaining to the ways in which “everything may become political” is more complex than initially appears, and is directed towards the heart of Schmitt’s theory. At stake, then, in Foucault’s statement “everything can be politicized” is not that everything might become the politics of the state, but rather that politics more correctly refers to the ways in which a particular relation of power can be transformed into a relation of struggle. Although Foucault prefers the term “agonism” over “antagonism,” he nevertheless retains the fundamental notion of antagonism inherent in Schmitt’s model of the political, while simultaneously revoking the basic premise that sustains this same theory.¹⁰⁶⁷ To claim, as does Schmitt, that the antagonistic dimension of the political only takes place within the domain of the state, would contradict Foucault’s counter-claim that “nothing is political,” or rather that politics is not inherently reducible to the state’s domain. Indeed, herein lies the key to rethinking the political anarchically: in Foucault’s model it is neither the state nor the exercise of governmentality that is the domain proper to the political, but rather what I have called the primacy of resistance; resistance to the exercise of governmentality is what transforms relations of power into relations of struggle, and it is through these relations of struggle that the condition of “politics” is able to emerge as such for

¹⁰⁶⁶ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 390.

¹⁰⁶⁷ Michel Foucault, “Subject and Power,” 342.

Foucault. Against the sovereign tradition of political philosophy, which presupposes the advent of the state as the condition from which the political historically emerges, it is in this way that Foucault importantly maintains to the contrary that “politics” is “that which is born with resistance to governmentality, the first uprising, the first confrontation.”

Furthermore, while in the trajectory that stretches from Aristotle to Hobbes and later culminates in Schmitt, we have seen how the domain of the political and the history of politics has been traditionally characterized in terms of the logic of the *archē*, the first principle from which politics comes to designate the techniques of government exercised within the domain of the state, Foucault instead denies the principle of the *archē*. Indeed, rather than presupposing the principle of the *archē* as the condition of possibility for the emergence of the political, Foucault begins with what can be referred to as the anarchic principle of the political, whereby politics emerges with the “first uprising, the first confrontation,” or the first act of resistance that transforms the exercise of government into an agonistic relation of struggle. Indeed, rather than taking the governmentalization of the state as the decisive criteria that allows the political to emerge as a distinct domain, Foucault’s repeated emphasis regarding how politics emerges with the “first uprising, the first confrontation,” is at once set to demonstrate how resistance is primary with the domain of the political and further that the primacy of resistance is what allows for the political to emerge as such. Thus, while the concept of counter-conduct designates the point in which Foucault redefines politics from the perspective of resistance, its practice is what animates an agonistic conception of the political. At the same time, however, Foucault’s claim that politics emerges with resistance to governmentality not only reveals an anarchist hypothesis of the political at the core of his thought, but also the beginning point from which to conceive an anarchist politics of resistance.

6.2 The Ethics of Revolt: Resistance as an Ethos of Counter-Conduct

For centuries we have been convinced that between our ethics, our personal ethics, our everyday life, and the great political and social and economic structures, there were analytical relations, and that we couldn’t change anything...I think we have to get rid of

*this idea of an analytical or necessary link between ethics and other social or economic or political structures.*¹⁰⁶⁸

*[T]hat ethics can be a very strong structure of existence, without any relation with the juridical per se, with an authoritarian system, with a disciplinary structure. All that is very interesting.*¹⁰⁶⁹

--Michel Foucault

In addition to all of these points of equivalences drawn in *Security, Territory Population* between resistance and counter-conduct, Foucault's work on counter-conduct is not limited to the question of politics, and is further set to inform a conceptual and historical correlation with his turn to the study of ethics. Thus, as Davidson notes, the notion of counter-conduct "allows one to move easily between the ethical and political, letting us see their many points of contact and intersection."¹⁰⁷⁰ In an interview from 1983, Foucault not only draws an explicit connection between his theory of politics and his turn toward ethics, but also that this connection is set to rethink "politics as an ethics."¹⁰⁷¹ If as Foucault suggests here, that a continuity between his theories of politics and ethics can be maintained in terms of a critical theory of "politics as an ethics," it is therefore my contention that *Security, Territory, Population* can be read not only as a conceptual bridge between the political and the ethical but, more specifically, between the conceptions of politics as resistance and the ethics of revolt. While Foucault's theory of power/resistance from the *History of Sexuality*, as well as his agonistic theory of the political in *Society Must Be Defended* ultimately culminates in redefining politics as "resistance to governmentality," this form of politics as resistance is itself animated by a distinct form of ethics as revolt. In this regard, Davidson has drawn an extensive connection between counter-conduct and resistance, while further outlining how this connection turns upon a unique theory of ethics. At stake in Davidson's work is to demonstrate how "politically and ethically, *counter-conduct* is the invention of a new philosophical concept" (original emphasis).¹⁰⁷² Focusing more directly on the

¹⁰⁶⁸ Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics," 261.

¹⁰⁶⁹ Ibid, 260.

¹⁰⁷⁰ Arnold Davidson, introduction to Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, xxi.

¹⁰⁷¹ Michel Foucault, "Politics and Ethics," 375.

¹⁰⁷² Arnold Davidson, introduction to Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, xxxii.

implications of Foucault's turn to ethics in relation to political theory, Kelly maintains that what Foucault comes to refer to as ethics is defined as a specific type of praxis against the pervasiveness of governmentality. Thus, for Kelly "this ethics is the generalized practice in response to pervasive government by which all those who are governed...hold government to account."¹⁰⁷³ In light of these readings, it is my contention that what Foucault refers to as counter-conduct not only adds an explicitly ethical component to his notion of politics as resistance, but also that this notion of ethics fundamentally changes the way in which the politics of resistance is both conceived and practiced.

In the Western tradition, ethics is most commonly understood as a branch of moral philosophy concerned with systematizing and defending certain concepts of right and wrong, or the moral principles that might govern one's individual or collective behavior. Yet rather than defining ethics as a set of normative or prescriptive rules that might come to govern the conduct of others, Foucault suggests in an interview from 1983 the following definition of ethics: "ethics is a practice; ethos is a manner of being."¹⁰⁷⁴ As a "practice" or "manner of being" what Foucault refers to as ethics seems to exclude any sort of normative frameworks or regulatory principles that might come to act as the common basis from which such ethical practices and ways of being could be formally known. Indeed, in her oft-cited critique of Foucault, Nancy Fraser argues that both Foucault's theory of resistance as well as his notion of ethics ultimately suffers from a clear lack of norms, and thus that "Foucault's work is normatively confused."¹⁰⁷⁵ Despite her intentions, however, Fraser nevertheless points toward a real possibility pertaining to how Foucault's theory of resistance might inform the basis of his concept of ethics. After pondering what sort of alternative normative framework Foucault might be presupposing, Fraser asks "[c]ould the language of domination, subjugation, struggle and resistance be interpreted as the skeleton of some alternative framework?"¹⁰⁷⁶ Fraser's immediate answer is a resolute no.¹⁰⁷⁷ Indeed, Foucault refuses the idea of a "regulatory principle"

¹⁰⁷³ Mark Kelly, *the Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, 150.

¹⁰⁷⁴ Michel Foucault, "Politics and Ethics," 377.

¹⁰⁷⁵ Nancy Fraser, *Unruly Practices*, 29.

¹⁰⁷⁶ *Ibid*, 29.

¹⁰⁷⁷ *Ibid*, 29. Here, Fraser maintains that she can find no concrete "clues in Foucault's writings as to what his alternative norms might be."

that might act as the basis for either politics or ethics on the ground that all political and ethical actions would therefore be placed under the “governance” of such a limiting principle.¹⁰⁷⁸ Yet, while Foucault does indeed refuse any sort of regulatory principles that might act as the basis of his conception of resistance, he does not exclude what is referred to in the same interview from 1983 as “a critical principle” in which one takes the non-necessity of relations of power and domination as a starting point.¹⁰⁷⁹ However, insofar as Foucault understands the domination/struggle and power/resistance as existing in a fundamental relationship of agonism, then as Newman more correctly suggests, the ethics of “resistance is not necessarily sanctioned by moral or rational standards, or by the promise of a better world.”¹⁰⁸⁰ Against Fraser, Newman instead concludes that “resistance is an absolute refusal of domination—a desperate struggle, sometimes to the death, with a particular relation of power.”¹⁰⁸¹ Although Fraser discounts the idea that resistance might come to serve as the basis of Foucault’s notions of both power and ethics it is my contention that what Newman takes as the basis of resistance—that is, the “absolute refusal” or struggle with a “particular relation of power”—can be further be extended as the fundamental basis of Foucauldian ethics. In this way, while we have seen how Foucault takes the “non-necessity of power” as the methodological approach to the studies of power, politics, and governmentality, this same notation forms the basis of what Foucault refers to as ethics—that is, ethics for Foucault takes the non-acceptance of power as the beginning point from which a critical ethos—or way of being-in-the-world, can be elaborated in life as a politics of resistance to governmentality.

¹⁰⁷⁸ Michel Foucault, “Politics and Ethics,” 379. Herein, after being asked whether his notion of ethics requires a “regulatory principle,” Foucault maintains the following distinction: “I perhaps wouldn’t say regulatory principle, that’s going to far, because starting from the point where you say regulatory principle, you grant that it is indeed, under its governance that the phenomenon has to be organized” (379).

¹⁰⁷⁹ Ibid, 379. There is a strong similarity between what Foucault refers to as the “critical principle” and what he later refers to in *On the Government of the Living*, as “anarchaeology.” While the later refers to the non-acceptance of power, the former designates the point in which one asks oneself “what proportion of nonconsentuality is implied in such a power relation, and whether that degreed of nonconsentuality is necessary or not, and then one may question every power relation to that extent” (379). Ultimately, then, rather than beginning with a regulatory principle, Foucault suggests that the closest he might come to a regulatory principle is “to say that perhaps one must not be for consentuality, but one must be against nonconsentuality” (79).

¹⁰⁸⁰ Saul Newman, *From Bakunin to Lacan*, 87.

¹⁰⁸¹ Ibid, 87.

As a practice, or way of being, ethics for Foucault at once designates a critical principle directed against the pervasiveness of governance, as well as a position of praxis, an ongoing struggle with power as government. Similar to his notion of “critique,” ethics as Foucault suggests begins with a critical principle, or critical attitude, that takes the “nonacceptance...of our own governments” as a starting point.¹⁰⁸² Indeed, this elaboration of a critical position beginning with the nonacceptance of government is, Foucault maintains:

an ethical one, but it is also political; it does not consist in saying merely, “I protest,” but in making of that attitude a political phenomenon that is as substantial as possible, and one which those who govern, here or there, will sooner or later be obliged to take into account.¹⁰⁸³

Foucault draws a clear connection here between politics and ethics not through an attitude of “protest,” but in the strategic conversion of this critical attitude into a “political phenomenon” that contests “those who govern.” At the same time, however, this type of ethico-political and critical attitude directed against the logic of governmentality, ultimately turns upon a praxis of resistance—an ongoing struggle with power as government—which Foucault refers to in *Security, Territory, Population* as “counter conduct.” While we have already seen how Foucault’s use of the term “counter-conduct” is set to redefine politics in terms of resistance to governmentality, it is now necessary to see how Foucault distinguishes revolts of conduct as a specific form of resistance, as well as how these forms of counter conduct hinge upon an ethics of revolt in which resistance to governmentality is not simply a fundamental struggle with the exercise of power as government, but also a movement towards another possible form-of-life. In this regard, Foucault maintains that these movements of resistance as counter-conduct are:

movements whose objective is a different form of conduct, that is to say: wanting to be conducted differently...towards other objectives...through other procedures

¹⁰⁸² Michel Foucault, “Politics and Ethics,” 377.

¹⁰⁸³ Ibid, 377.

and objectives. They are movements that also seek, possibly at any rate, to escape the direction of others and to define the way for each to conduct himself.¹⁰⁸⁴

Here, Foucault clarifies that what he refers to as counter-conduct consists of a double dimension of resistance, in which the struggle against the exercise of government is paired with the affirmation of new forms of conduct, and ultimately as we will later see new forms of autonomous, ungovernable subjectivity. One of the key characteristics of counter-conduct is how these revolts of conduct are distinguished as movements seeking to be conducted differently—that is, movements of resistance who struggle against the logic and practice of governmentality in order to achieve a different way of being in the world. At stake here for Foucault is how the counter-movements of resistance arising within the field of governmentality are directed not simply at the state, but rather against the government of conduct. This struggle against the logic and practice of governmentality designates what can be referred to as the political pole of counter conduct.

At the same time, however, these revolts of conduct are also movements that seek to “escape the direction of others” in order to autonomously define the domain of one’s own conduct. This second aspect of counter conduct in which one attempts to ultimately escape the direction of others designates the ethical counterpart to the politics of resistance against governmentality; at stake here is not simply a struggle against a form of power, but an affirmative struggle toward increasing one’s autonomy. With the addition of this ethical component of resistance, Foucault’s notion of counter-conduct means that politics as resistance to governmentality is neither to be considered a mere reaction to the exercise of power, nor its total negation; instead resistance as counter-conduct is itself productive—indeed life-affirming—and has as its aim the autonomous self-transformation of the subject. Foucault thus confirms that these revolts of conduct are movements that “definitely have a productivity, forms of existence, organization, and a consistency and solidity that the purely negative word disobedience does not capture.”¹⁰⁸⁵ Indeed, what is produced in revolts of conduct against the exercise of power as government is the self-formation and production of new forms of subjectivity and forms-

¹⁰⁸⁴ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 194-195.

¹⁰⁸⁵ *Ibid*, 200.

of-life. If politics conceived as resistance necessitates a corresponding critical ethos, herein lies the key for Foucault: at stake in the ethical component of counter-conduct is not only that these forms of resistance take as their adversary a form of power exercised as a “political government of men,” but also how the focus of these movements of resistance is not directed at a revolutionary overthrow of power, but rather toward the transformation of one’s way of being, a movement of withdrawal from power and government. This relation to the self, in which one struggles against relations of power in order to produce new forms of life is what Foucault refers to in *The Use of Pleasure* and *The Care of the Self* amongst other places as “ascesis” (askēsis)¹⁰⁸⁶ or “the care of the self” (epimeleia heautou).¹⁰⁸⁷

Although Foucault acknowledges that it might appear a “bit paradoxical to present asceticism as counter-conduct,” the idea that asceticism exemplifies a form of counter-conduct highlights two vital characteristics that help refine the ethical component required in the theory of resistance to governmentality.¹⁰⁸⁸ First, as Foucault maintains in *Security, Territory, Population*, askēsis, which is defined in *Security, Territory, Population* in terms of “an exercise of self on self,” designates a “sort of close combat of the individual...in which the authority, presence, and gaze of someone else is, if not impossible, at least unnecessary.”¹⁰⁸⁹ Here, Foucault underlines the ways in which counter-conduct turns upon a practice of askēsis that attempts to render the authority of others “impossible”—that is, counter-conduct actively “denies access to an external power,” so as to transform the practices of government into an “unnecessary” relation of power.¹⁰⁹⁰ In this way, counter-conduct designates a form of voluntary refusal to submit to power exercised as government. Yet, this practice of askēsis as counter-conduct is, according to Foucault, coextensive with a struggle toward new forms of subjectivity. This struggle towards a transformation in one’s conditions is what Foucault understands as ethics. Thus, as Foucault maintains in an often cited interview from 1984, an “ascetic practice” also designates “an exercise of the self on the self by which one attempts to

¹⁰⁸⁶ See: Michel Foucault, *The Use of Pleasure*, 72-77.

¹⁰⁸⁷ See: Michel Foucault, *The Care of the Self*, 43-67.

¹⁰⁸⁸ Michel Foucault, *Security, Territory, Population*, 204.

¹⁰⁸⁹ Ibid, 205.

¹⁰⁹⁰ Ibid, 208.

develop and transform oneself, and to attain to a certain mode of being.”¹⁰⁹¹ In this regard, insofar as the term “ethics” for Foucault at once refers to a “practice” and a “way of being,” then resistance as a form of counter-conduct—a praxis of askēsis—can be defined as a practice against the exercise of power as government coupled with a struggle toward the invention of new forms-of-life. Ethics as such arises, according to Foucault, as a movement of resistance—that is a permanent ethic of revolt—that assumes the form of new practices of subjectivity.

Foucault’s writings on the relation between ethics, askēsis, and the care of the self are numerous and develop over a wide variety of themes and historical contexts. While Foucault draws several interesting connections between askēsis and resistance, I need not go into extensive detail into Foucault’s writings on the care of the self. Instead my goal has been to demonstrate how the political and ethical periods of Foucault’s thought can be connected through the concept of resistance, and furthermore that these forms of counter-conduct, which turn upon the elaboration of a permanent ethic of revolt, add a vital dimension to Foucault’s theory of resistance in a way that still needs to be explored. In *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, Foucault explains precisely how the turn toward the study of governmentality bridges the gap between the political and ethical periods of his thought. As Foucault concludes:

the theory of political power as an institution usually refers to a juridical conception of the subject of right, it seems to me that the analysis of governmentality—that is to say, of power as a set of reversible relationships—must refer to an ethics of the subject defined by the relationship of self to self...and I think it is around these notions that we should be able to connect together the question of politics and the question of ethics.¹⁰⁹²

Perhaps even more important, however, is how Foucault begins to rethink resistance not simply as a struggle against power, but in terms of an ethic of resistance located in the care of the self. In this regard, Edward McGushin has argued that what is surprising about the turn toward ethics is how “Foucault discovered, through his research in ancient

¹⁰⁹¹ Michel Foucault, “The Ethics of Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom,” 282.

¹⁰⁹² Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject. Lectures at the Collège de France 1981-1982*, trans. Graham Burchell (New York: Picador, 2006), 252.

philosophy, an unexpected site of resistance to power in the relationship we take up with ourselves.”¹⁰⁹³ Moreover, Johanna Oksala claims that the care of the self is the ethical domain in which Foucault situates his theory of resistance. Thus, Oksala maintains that the “focus of the government of the self by one’s self is crucial in Foucault’s elaboration of resistance,” and furthermore that “[e]thics is the domain in which he situates it.”¹⁰⁹⁴ Yet, while Foucault indeed understands the movements of counter-conduct and practices of askēsis as specific sites of resistance, he also maintains that this type of ethics, this ethics of revolt of insurrections of counter-conduct reveals a real political possibility from which relations of power might effectively be resisted. While in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* Foucault acknowledges that “we might have to suspect that we find it impossible today to constitute an ethic of the self, even though it may be an urgent, fundamental, and politically indispensable task,” he concludes that “after all...there is no first or final point of resistance to political power other than in the relationship one has to oneself.”¹⁰⁹⁵

While Foucault’s claim regarding how an ethic of the self can come to constitute the first and final point of resistance to power might initially appear somewhat inexplicable, what is at stake is not that an ethic of the self designates the sole point from which one might actively engage in resistance, but rather that this ethic of revolt reveals an alternative paradigm from which resistance is historically manifest as a struggle against the logic of governmentality, and further how this allows us to rethink the question of politics of resistance in new ways. In an interview from 1984 when Foucault is asked if the statement cited above from *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* designates the only “useful” practice from which power can be resisted, Foucault maintains that he does not “believe that the only possible point of resistance to political power...lies in the relationship of the self to itself;” instead, Foucault suggests that the ethic of revolt practiced as counter-conduct “makes it possible to bring out the freedom of the subject and its relationship to others—which constitutes the very substance of ethics.”¹⁰⁹⁶ At the same time, however, it is this understanding of ethics that Foucault nevertheless suggests can be elaborated politically. Indeed, while governmentality develops for Foucault

¹⁰⁹³ Edward McGushin, *Foucault’s Askēsis*, xv.

¹⁰⁹⁴ Johanna Oksala, *Foucault on Freedom*, 165.

¹⁰⁹⁵ Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 252.

¹⁰⁹⁶ Michel Foucault, “The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom,” 300.

according to a specific rationality that is both individualizing and totalizing, the corresponding ethic of revolt directly targets this logic, and is set not simply as a movement that resists the state, but rather a struggle against the forms of power that connect individuals to the state. Recalling that what needs to be attacked through resistance is the specific rationality of governmentality—that is the simultaneity between the individualizing techniques of government and the totalizing power of the state, Foucault clarifies this idea in “The Subject and Power,” and maintains:

Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are. We have to imagine and to build up what we could be to get rid of this kind of political “double bind,” which is the simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures. The conclusion would be that the political, ethical, social, philosophical problems of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state, and from the state’s institutions, but to liberate us from the state and the type of individualization linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality that has been imposed on us for centuries.¹⁰⁹⁷

Against more traditional notions of historical struggle that take the state as the adversary at which resistance is directed, Foucault specifies here that an ethic of revolt begins with a refusal of who we are—that is a refusal of the individualizing techniques of government and the forms of subjectivity that connect us to the state. Indeed, it is in this way that Foucault maintains that the care of the self might designate the first point of resistance to power. Importantly, then, this refusal of who we are targets the specificity of power exercised as government—the “political double bind” of individualizing and totalizing power structures—and seeks a fundamental rupture in the nexus that links individuals to the state and makes them governable. At stake, then, in this ethic of revolt is not that resistance is exhaustively directed against the totality of the state, but instead at the “type of individualization linked to the state.” At the same time, however, what is crucial for Foucault is that this type of resistance ultimately turns upon the affirmation of and promotion of “new forms of subjectivity.” Indeed, this is the crucial point for Foucault: politics as resistance, as an ethics of revolt is not manifest in a struggle with the state, but

¹⁰⁹⁷ Michel Foucault, “Subject and Power,” 336.

rather in the invention of new forms-of-life against and autonomous from the governmentalization of the state.

We have seen how Foucault's notion of "counter-conduct" forms an interesting connection that bridges the political and ethical periods of his thought. In this way, counter-conduct is at once the concept through which Foucault redefines politics as resistance to governmentality, as well as how this form of politics as resistance turns upon an ethics of revolt struggling toward the formation of new forms of subjectivity. Thus according to McGushin, the convergence between the political and ethical "allows Foucault to conceive of an alternative model of political ethics, or of an ethics of resistance to the proliferation of power."¹⁰⁹⁸ If as Foucault maintains that modern forms of governmentality operate by producing individualities and governable forms of subjectivity, "then the practices of the self would represent an experience of ethical life which resists those forces."¹⁰⁹⁹ Simons takes on a similar position and maintains that Foucault's turn toward ethics led "his politics to...an ethic of permanent resistance."¹¹⁰⁰ Yet, Simons also suggests that this ethic of permanent resistance extends Foucault's agonistic conception of politics. Foucault's "affirmation of agonism" sustains, Simons writes, "the active, participatory capacities of subjects required for...resisting domination."¹¹⁰¹ It is this ethical component to the politics of resistance that Foucault maintains is missing from traditional liberation and revolutionary movements: "[r]ecent liberation movements suffer from the fact that they cannot find any principle on which to base the elaboration of a new ethics."¹¹⁰² For Foucault, then, the problem with contemporary liberation movements is that they tend to seek to provide a scientific basis for ethics while uncritically neglecting the necessity of constructing new forms of subjectivity that might effectively resist power.

6.3 Foucault's Anarchist Ethic of Counter-Conduct

¹⁰⁹⁸ Edward McGushin, *Foucault's Askēsis: An Introduction to the Philosophical Life*, 14.

¹⁰⁹⁹ *Ibid*, 14.

¹¹⁰⁰ Jon Simons, *Foucault and the Political*, 87.

¹¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, 86.

¹¹⁰² Michel Foucault, "On the Genealogy of Ethics," 255-256.

Government, the dominion of human conduct represent[s] the stronghold of man's enslavement and all the horrors it entails...Anarchism rouses man to rebellion against this...monster.

--Emma Goldman¹¹⁰³

The need for a new life becomes apparent...The machinery of government, entrusted with the maintenance of the existing order, continues to function, but at every turn of its deteriorated gears it slips and stops...there [is] no other way out than by the road of insurrection.

--Peter Kropotkin¹¹⁰⁴

*There is the possibility of that moment when life can no longer be bought, when the authorities can no longer do anything, and when, facing the gallows and machine guns, people revolt.*¹¹⁰⁵

--Michel Foucault

Although Foucault remains skeptical of certain recent liberations movements and theories of revolution insofar as they lack an ethical principle from which to base the elaboration of a politics of resistance, in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* he lists a few key historical examples and philosophies of counter-conduct that have attempted to find a politics based on a permanent ethic of revolt. Just before Foucault claims that an ethics of the self designates the first point of resistance to power, he maintains that a “whole section of nineteenth-century thought can be read as a difficult attempt to, a series of difficult attempts to, to reconstitute an ethics and an aesthetics of the self.”¹¹⁰⁶ Amongst these attempts at constituting an ethic of the self Foucault concludes that if we look at the examples of

Stirner, Schopenhauer, Nietzsche, dandyism, Baudelaire, anarchy, anarchist thought, etcetera, then you have a series of attempts that are, of course, very different from each other, but which are all more or less obsessed by the question: is it possible to constitute, or reconstitute, an aesthetics of the self.¹¹⁰⁷

Foucault's mention of the German philosopher Max Stirner, as well as “anarchy” and “anarchist thought” as key referents of the attempt to constitute an ethic of the self should

¹¹⁰³ Emma Goldman, “Anarchism: What it Really stands for Anarchy,” 38.

¹¹⁰⁴ Peter Kropotkin, “The Spirit of Revolt,” in *Anarchism: A Collection of Revolutionary Writings*, ed. Roger N. Baldwin (New York: Dover Publications, 2002), 35-37.

¹¹⁰⁵ Michel Foucault, “Useless to Revolt?”, 449-450.

¹¹⁰⁶ Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 251.

¹¹⁰⁷ Ibid, 251.

not go unnoticed. Indeed, while I have maintained throughout this project that Foucault's theory of power, politics, governmentality, and ultimately resistance all develop and turn upon what I have referred to as anarchist hypothesis of the political, we see here that a further connection can be made between anarchism and Foucault's theory of ethics. While Kelly has observed the connection Foucault draws between anarchist thought, resistance, and an ethics of the self, he just as quickly dismisses this idea as a mere after thought and claims that these "movements lack the asceticism necessary to the constitution of an ethics."¹¹⁰⁸ Yet, rather than dismissing this correlation, it is my contention that the connection Foucault draws between anarchist thought and an ethic of the self in revolt not only adds a vital dimension to the anarchist hypothesis of the political that underpins his work, but also opens up a real political possibility for an anarchist politics of resistance in which the state and the exercise of power as government can be contested. Like Foucault's notion of counter-conduct, anarchism can be understood as a movement of resistance against power exercised as government coupled with an ethic of revolt that actively struggles toward the formation of new types of subjectivities.

The way in which Foucault takes anarchism as a key referent for his understanding of the ethics of revolt is not an isolated instance. Thus, in order to see how Foucault invokes anarchism as a possible basis from which to advance an ethical politics of resistance, it is necessary to turn to "The Subject and Power" wherein Foucault outlines several propositions on resistance so as to account for an ethical conception of struggle against governmentality. While the turn toward the study of governmentality and the corresponding movements of counter-conduct in *Security, Territory, Population* bridge the gap between the political and the ethical in terms of elaborating a permanent ethic of resistance, in "The Subject and Power" Foucault reaffirms this continuity and outlines several propositions on resistance which help further explore how this form of

¹¹⁰⁸ Michael Kelly, *Political Philosophy of Michel Foucault*, 159. Kelly's denial that anarchism might offer a key example of Foucauldian ethics is based off the claim that anarchist thought would be too individualist to constitute a clear ethic of the self. Thus, while Kelly acknowledges that "lifestyle anarchism" might appear as a movement "interested in building a new subjectivity," he concludes: "while anarchism does appear in Foucault's above quoted list of attempts to reconstitute an aesthetics of the self, this is an aesthetics of total liberation in the personal sphere, and as such is still universalist and utopian" (158-159).

politics as resistance develops as an ethic of revolt toward the affirmation of new forms of subjectivity, while additionally drawing a key connection between this ethics of revolt and an anarchist politics. Although we have seen that in *The History of Sexuality* Foucault enumerates several theses on power that form the basic methodological framework for an alternative economy of power relations that begins with the primacy of resistance, in “The Subject and Power” returns to this notion and maintains that “in order to understand what power relations are about, perhaps we should investigate the forms of resistance and attempts made to dislocate these relations.”¹¹⁰⁹ It is in this way that “The Subject and Power” can be read as a critical and fundamental companion to the power resistance dynamic attested to in the fifth thesis. Further at stake in this essay, however, is to account for the ethical specificity of these forms of resistance realized in the struggle against the logic and practice of government. Herein, Foucault maintains that what is important to the elaboration of politics as resistance to governmentality is that these revolts are animated by a “struggle for a new subjectivity.”¹¹¹⁰ By returning to this ethical component of the politics of resistance, “The Subject and Power” ought to be understood as a critical extension of Foucault’s notions of counter-conduct, askēsis, and the ethic of the self.

While “The Subject and Power,” is often recognized as an important text in the context of Foucault’s larger body of work, a text in which the theory of power is recast within the context of governmentality, his critics tend to overlook not only how the question of resistance reappears in this text as an ethic of revolt, but also how anarchism forms a key referent for this ethical conception of the politics of struggle. Thus, while Foucault has been criticized for failing to offer historical examples of his notion of politics, the importance of “The Subject and Power” directly lies in the way that Foucault accounts for the question of struggle in terms of resistance to power as government. At the same time, however, the importance is further exemplified in the way Foucault explores the ethical component of this theory of resistance. It is this ethics of resistance that forms the basic connection between anarchism and Foucault. After briefly explaining how it is in regard to the question of the subject that relations of power can be

¹¹⁰⁹ Michel Foucault, “Subject and Power,” 329.

¹¹¹⁰ Ibid, 333.

explored, while also outlining a “series of oppositions” developed in response to the “administration over the ways people live,” in “The Subject and Power” Foucault turns to an extended discussion pertaining to the common characteristics through which the movements of resistance against governmentality might be distinguished from other types of struggle.¹¹¹¹ In searching for a way to describe how these revolts against the exercise of governmentality might be distinguished from other forms of struggle, Foucault claims that it is “not enough to say that these are anti-authority struggles,” and thus that “we must try to define more precisely what they have in common.”¹¹¹² The common characteristics that can come to account for the forms of struggle against the exercise of power as government are organized by Foucault in “The Subject and Power” into six propositions. At stake for Foucault in these propositions is to specify exactly what he means by defining politics as resistance to governmentality, as well as how these forms of resistance can be distinguished from more traditional forms of liberation such as class struggle or revolution. While the first three propositions are set to outline the general framework that specifies certain key characteristics of the politics of resistance, the latter three are set to address not only what these forms of resistance are against, but also what they struggle toward. First, Foucault maintains that the forms of resistance directed at the exercise of power as government are characterized as “transversal struggles,” in which the question of revolt can neither be “limited to one country,” or “confined to a particular political or economic form of government.”¹¹¹³ By “transversal struggles,” then, Foucault means to suggest two ideas that help to overcome some of the ambiguity regarding how he conceives of an ethical politics as resistance to government. Here, Foucault demonstrates the global, yet non-universal, extent of revolts of conduct—that is, since resistance is co-extensive and primary with power, resistance to governmentality necessarily takes on a global form corresponding with the field of power relations as government. In other words, the global network of power relations exercised in terms of government correspond to and are co-extensive with the transversal character of resistance to governmentality. Furthermore, Foucault clarifies that the very specificity of

¹¹¹¹ Ibid, 329.

¹¹¹² Ibid, 329.

¹¹¹³ Ibid, 329.

these struggles is not confined to a single form of government; hence, although resistance to government takes on a global form, there is no universal law of revolt, but the transversality of forms of revolt against the varying exercises of governmentality. In addition to the transversal characteristic of revolt, in the second proposition Foucault maintains that the “target of these struggles is power effects as such.”¹¹¹⁴ What these forms of resistance to governmentality are directed at is not, according to Foucault, the abstract monolithic notions of state and capitalism, but instead the specific ways in which power is exercised as government. In this way, Foucault’s point is to demonstrate how the primary objective of resistance to government “is to attack not so much such-or-such institution of power, or group, or elite, or class but, rather, a technique, a form of power.”¹¹¹⁵ What is at stake here is not simply a change in the objective target of resistance—that is a change from the macro notions of state and capital to the micro conception of power relations—but the way in which resistance to governmentality is directly enmeshed within the forms of power against which it struggles.

Foucault’s third proposition on resistance to governmentality continues the logic of the first two, while highlighting an important possible connection between this understanding of resistance and anarchism. Foucault points toward the way in which these forms of resistance against the exercise of power as government are therefore “immediate struggles.”¹¹¹⁶ Practices of resistance to governmentality are “immediate” forms of struggle according to Foucault, because in such struggles “people criticize instances of power that are the closest to them”—that is, the forms of power “which exercise their action on individuals.”¹¹¹⁷ Thus, while Foucault maintains that the “target” of resistance to governmentality is directed at the effect of power relations as such, this is because power as government is exercised as an “action on individuals.” Yet, at the same time as these “immediate” forms of struggle are directed at power as government instead of the “chief enemy,” of state or capital, this means for Foucault that these “immediate” forms of struggle against governmentality are to be fundamentally distinguished from the traditional concept of liberation through either class struggle or revolution. In this way,

¹¹¹⁴ Ibid, 330.

¹¹¹⁵ Ibid, 331.

¹¹¹⁶ Ibid, 330.

¹¹¹⁷ Ibid, 330.

forms of resistance to governmentality are “immediate” for Foucault because they do not “expect to find a solution to their problems at a future date (that is, liberations, revolutions, end of class struggle).”¹¹¹⁸ Rather than understanding the question of struggle in terms of a future classless and stateless society realized and made manifest in the form of a divine, or messianic revolution, Foucault emphasizes that the immediacy of resistance to governmentality is itself a form of what anarchists traditionally refer to in terms of *direct action*.¹¹¹⁹ Thus, Foucault argues that “[i]n comparison with a theoretical scale of explanations or a revolutionary order that polarizes the historian,” forms of resistance to governmentality can neither be reduced to the notion of class struggle nor a revolution-to-come. Instead Foucault clarifies that “they are anarchistic struggles.”¹¹²⁰ Foucault’s choice to identify the forms of resistance against governmentality as “anarchistic struggles” is vital to his understanding of an ethical politics of resistance to governmentality. These forms of struggle are “anarchistic” since they seek an immediate rupture in the logic of the archē, not in terms of a future revolution that might ultimately end class struggle, but in terms of a permanent insurrection against the immediate effects of power relations. Yet, at the same time, however, Foucault characterizes these forms of resistance as “anarchistic struggles” since they exemplify an immediate and permanent struggle toward autonomy, rather than a revolutionary struggle over power. In other words, such struggles are “anarchistic,” according to Foucault, not because they seek to overturn state power, but because these movements of resistance struggle towards new forms of subjectivity.

While the first three propositions in “The Subject and Power” are set to outline how the forms of resistance to governmentality designate what Foucault refers to as “anarchistic struggles,” the final three are set to explore more specifically what is at stake in these forms of resistance, as well as how these struggles can therefore be differentiated

¹¹¹⁸ Ibid, 330.

¹¹¹⁹ See: Uri Gordon, *Anarchy Alive: Anti-Authoritarian Politics from Practice to Theory* (London: Pluto Press, 2008), 17. Uri Gordon defines “direct action” as an “action without intermediaries, whereby an individual or a group uses their own power and resources to change reality in a desired direction.” “Anarchists,” Gordon continues “understand direct action as a matter of taking social change into one’s own hands, by intervening directly in a situation rather than appealing to an external agent (typically a government) for its rectification. This is mirrored by disinterest in operating through established political channels or in building political power within the state.”

¹¹²⁰ Michel Foucault, “Subject and Power,” 330.

from more traditional notions of struggle. By way of summary, Foucault reminds his reader exactly what the object of resistance to governmentality is directed against:

The main objective of these struggles is to attack...this form of power that applies itself to immediate everyday life categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his identity, imposes a law of truth on him that he must recognize and have others recognize in him. It is a form of power that makes individuals subjects.¹¹²¹

As Foucault maintains here, the primary target of the forms of resistance to governmentality are the techniques of power as subjection—that is, the techniques which turn an individual into a subject of government. As revolts of conduct organized against the techniques of subjection, Foucault’s fourth proposition argues that forms of resistance to the exercise of government “are struggles against the government of individualization.”¹¹²² As resistance to the “government of individualization,” what is at stake for Foucault is not that these forms of struggle are “for or against the individual.”¹¹²³ Instead what is at stake is that that these forms of resistance are aimed at the techniques of power exercised as subjection or subjectivation (*assujettissement*). In this sense, resistance to the exercise of power as government is directed against the “form of power that makes individuals subjects.”¹¹²⁴ In regard to this form of power, Judith Butler has argued that Foucault’s term “subjectivation” carries a fundamental paradox within itself. “*Assujettissement*,” Butler writes, “denotes both the becoming of the subject and the process of subjection...a subjection which implies a radical dependency” (original italics).¹¹²⁵ As Butler suggests here, power exercised as government at once signifies a process of becoming subjected to power as well as a process of becoming a subject of power as such. Because the techniques of government refer to a dual process of subjection, the way in which Foucault designates the struggles against these forms of power as “anarchistic” highlights a vital characteristic essential to his theory of resistance. At stake in the politics of resistance against governmentality is not simply a

¹¹²¹ Ibid, 331.

¹¹²² Ibid, 330.

¹¹²³ Ibid, 330.

¹¹²⁴ Ibid, 331.

¹¹²⁵ Judith Butler, *The Psychic Life of Power: Theories in Subjection* (California: Stanford University Press, 1997), 83.

revolt against the exercise of power as such but, more specifically, a movement against the dual process of subjection—a fundamental revolt against the becoming subject to government—that is, a *revolt against becoming-governable*.

In the fifth proposition on resistance Foucault maintains that these forms of resistance are “struggles against the privilege of knowledge,” or the ways in which relations of power are inherently linked with relations of knowledge.¹¹²⁶ According to Foucault, then, what is additionally at stake in these “anarchistic struggles” is the way in which relations of power function, circulate, and are “linked with the privileges of knowledge.”¹¹²⁷ In other words, these struggles are forms of resistance against the relations of power-knowledge—that is a revolt against the imposition of forms of knowledge bound to forms of power. Finally, Foucault further clarifies that “all these present struggles revolve around the question: Who are we?”¹¹²⁸ Here, the notion of resistance designates, according to Foucault, a “refusal of these abstractions, of economic and ideological state violence, which ignore who we are individually, and also a refusal of a scientific or administrative inquisition that determines who one is.”¹¹²⁹ As a refusal of who we are—that is, a refusal of the process of becoming governable—at stake is how these “anarchistic struggles” attempt to carve out a terrain of life that is itself ungovernable. With these components form the basis for a preliminary outline regarding the objective targets of the forms of resistance to government, what is ultimately at stake in these “anarchistic” forms of resistance to the exercise of government is, as Foucault importantly maintains, “a struggle for a new subjectivity.”¹¹³⁰ In this way, while Foucault designates the specificity of revolt in terms of the forms of resistance to the exercise of power as a form of government, he also maintains that the overall goal of these forms of struggle is to promote and develop new forms of radical subjectivity made possible in and through resistance to the individualizing techniques of governmentality—that is, what is at stake in these struggles is the development of new forms of life against the techniques of government. At the same time, however, insofar as these struggles are,

¹¹²⁶ Ibid, 330.

¹¹²⁷ Ibid, 330.

¹¹²⁸ Ibid, 331.

¹¹²⁹ Ibid, 331.

¹¹³⁰ Ibid, 332.

as Foucault suggests, struggles against the government of individuation, it is my contention that what is produced in these forms of resistance is what can be termed, following Agamben, the *ungovernable*.¹¹³¹ As an attempt to constitute an ethic of the self in the ungovernable, the politics of resistance not only designates an ongoing struggle with power exercised as government, but a struggle toward a new ethos, or form-of-life that at once coincides with and is brought about through the praxis of resistance. Through Foucault the ungovernable can be understood as a form-of-life obtained in a condition of revolt. As Foucault suggests in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, a form of “life obtained thanks to a *technē*, does not obey a *regula* (a rule): it submits to a form. It is a style of life, a sort of form one gives to one’s life.”¹¹³² Here, Foucault clarifies how an ethic of revolt proceeds from a position of autonomy; rather than a set of prescribed rules, it is an ethic “one gives to one’s life.” At the same time, the form or style of life produced in an ethic of revolt is the ungovernable insofar as the transformation in subjectivity is what is brought about through the struggle against power exercised as government. Indeed, if Foucault is correct that it is through our forms of subjectivity that our behavior is conducted or governed, then what is ultimately at stake in these forms of resistance is the production of ungovernable forms of subjectivity; an ethic of revolt elaborated as a permanent process of *becoming-ungovernable*.

While Foucault emphasizes the significance of these “anarchistic” forms of resistance to the exercise of governmentality in contrast to more traditional forms of struggle his point is not, however, to suggest that other forms of resistance and revolt either do not exist or are of little importance. Instead Foucault clarifies that there have

¹¹³¹ See: Giorgio Agamben, “What is an Apparatus?,” in *What is an Apparatus and Other Essays*, trans. David Kishik and Stefan Pedatella (California: Stanford University Press, 2009), 24. Here Agamben concludes by arguing that the problem of politics “cannot be properly raised as long as those who are concerned with are unable to intervene in their own processes of subjectification, any more than their own apparatuses, in order to then bring to light the Ungovernable, which is the beginning and, at the same time, the vanishing point of every politics.” It is clear that in utilizing the term “ungovernable” Agamben means to suggest something along the lines of Foucault’s notion of the struggles against power exercised as subjection. Indeed, the “ungovernable” is what emerges when one intervenes in “their own processes of subjectification,” it designates the transformation of one’s form of subjectivity as brought about through the practice of resistance. Also see: Giorgio Agamben, *The Kingdom and the Glory: For a Theological Genealogy of Economy and Government*, trans. Lorenzo Chiesa (California: Stanford University Press, 2011), 65. Here, Agamben writes that the “ungovernable” refers to “something that could never assume the form of an *oikonomia*.”

¹¹³² Michel Foucault, *The Hermeneutics of the Subject*, 424.

been three general forms in which forms of resistance and revolt have been historically elaborated: struggles against forms of ethnic, religious and social domination; struggles against economic forms of exploitation; and finally struggles against subjection—that is “against forms of subjectivity and submission.”¹¹³³ While, Foucault maintains that resistance against the submission of subjectivity is “becoming more and more important,” he also argues that the “struggles against forms of domination and exploitation have not disappeared.”¹¹³⁴ Thus, rather than directly excluding other forms of revolt, Foucault instead maintains that “in history you can find a lot of examples of these three kinds of social struggles, either isolated from each other, or mixed together.”¹¹³⁵ Despite, then, the ways in which Foucault is criticized for remaining ambiguous in regard to the question of resistance, in “The Subject and Power” he does indeed directly outline how these revolts of conduct are to be critically and practically distinguished from more traditional theories of liberation, while *Security, Territory, Population* offers a historical example of these forms of revolt in the notion of counter-conduct. Furthermore, it is in “The Subject and Power” that Foucault again importantly locates anarchism as a key referent for his inquiry in the question of resistance and the ethics of revolt. To be sure, the connection Foucault draws between his theory of resistance, the corresponding ethic of revolt, and anarchism not only opens a real possibility for a critical praxis of resistance, but also a vital way from which to rethink the stakes and praxis of an anarchist politics of resistance.

Although Foucault maintains that forms of revolt against domination and exploitation have not been eradicated from the field of revolt, his inquiry into the forms of resistance against government nevertheless suggests an alternative framework from which the revolts against government as “anarchistic struggles” can be distinguished from traditional theories of liberation and revolution. Forms of resistance to the exercise of power as government can be distinguished from a theory and praxis of revolution because they are firstly immediate struggles against the specific techniques of “subjection,” against the process of becoming governable. To be sure, what is attacked in

¹¹³³ Michel Foucault, “Subject and Power,” 331.

¹¹³⁴ Ibid, 332.

¹¹³⁵ Ibid, 331.

these forms of resistance is not the state or capital, but the techniques of power that both subjugate and make one subject to the exercise of power as government. This means, however, that the forms of resistance Foucault describes should not be understood in terms of a revolutionary struggle with state power; at stake in the struggle against government is therefore not a future end to revolutionary class struggle in which relations of power might be fully eradicated from the political. Instead of invoking the term ‘revolution’ to describe the ultimate goal and terminal point of all forms of struggle, what is at stake in “anarchistic struggles” is instead *insurrection*, the immediate elaboration of new forms of life made possible in the realization of resistance against governmentality. It is in this way we can fully understand Foucault’s claim regarding how the “philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state, and from the state’s institutions, but to liberate us from both the state and from the type of individualization linked to the state.”¹¹³⁶ Indeed, herein lies the political possibility of Foucault’s theory of resistance, as well as the ethic of permanent revolt that animates this form of struggle. If one is to resist the state, one must first revolt against the government of individualization; it is an insurrectionary struggle against becoming-governable that breaks the nexus that binds us to the state, and allows for its continuation. Indeed, if it is true as Foucault suggests that the governmentalization of the state is what has allowed the state to survive, then it through an insurrectionary struggle with governmentality through which the state might in fact be abolished. While anarchism is commonly understood, although by no means exclusively, as a form of politics premised on a theory and praxis of revolution—an ongoing struggle with the state and capital that will eventually lead to future classless and stateless society, it is my contention that Foucault’s notion of the “anarchistic struggles” against governmentality tend toward emphasizing the importance of insurrection rather than revolution as the paradigmatic form revolt assumes in the struggle against government.

With the critical exploration of the question of resistance and its relation to ethical struggle toward new forms of subjectivity designating the principal problematic of “The Subject and Power,” it is clear that anarchism designates a possible basis from which Foucault’s ethical politics of resistance might arise. At the same time, however,

¹¹³⁶ Ibid, 336.

Foucault's theory of a permanent ethic of resistance allows us rethink an anarchist politics of resistance in radically new ways. First, politics as resistance to governmentality is not itself premised, yet does not exclude, the telos of revolution as the end-point of an ethic of revolt. Rather than a revolutionary politics, through Foucault we can begin to conceive of the politics of resistance in terms of insurrection—indeed, as insurrections of conduct, and insurrection of the self—which, in struggling for an autonomous, ungovernable form-of-life, effectively creates a fundamental rupture with the logic and practice of the state. In order to understand this vital differentiation between insurrection and revolution it is necessary to turn to an often cited passage from Max Stirner's 1844 text *The Ego and His Own: The Case of the Individual Against Authority*. Keeping in mind that Foucault mentions Stirner in *The Hermeneutics of the Subject* as an example of a philosopher who attempted to reconstitute an ethic of the self, or practice of askēsis, then a connection can easily be made between the former's ethic of revolt and the latter's notion of insurrection. Indeed, Foucault's understanding of the forms of resistance directed at the government of individualization appears to echo Stirner in the distinction maintained between revolution and insurrection. According to Stirner, "[r]evolution and insurrection must not be looked upon as synonymous:"

The former consists in an overturning of conditions, of the established condition or *status*, the state or society, and is accordingly a *political* or *social* act; the latter has indeed for its unavoidable consequence a transformation of circumstances, yet does not start from it but from men's discontent with themselves, is not an armed rising, but a rising of individuals, a getting up, without regard to the arrangements that spring from it (original italics).¹¹³⁷

Similar to Foucault's notion of an ethic of permanent resistance, Stirner's notion of insurrection begins not with a revolt against the state, but rather in individual's "discontent with themselves," a "rising up of individuals" out of the government of individuation. At the same time, however, Stirner takes this a step further and maintains an additional distinction between revolution and insurrection that highlights what is ultimately at stake in Foucault's ethics of resistance. "The revolution," Stirner writes,

¹¹³⁷ Max Stirner, *The Ego and His Own: The Case of the Individual Against Authority*, trans. Steven T. Byington (New York: Dover Publications, 2005), 316.

aims “at new *arrangements*”—that is a rupture with the previous arrangement in order to arrive at a new set of arrangements—whereas “insurrection leads us to no longer *let* ourselves be arranged, but to arrange ourselves, and set no glittering hopes on institutions” (original italics).¹¹³⁸ What Stirner refers to as “insurrection” begins not only with a refusal of the self, but a refusal to be “arranged” or governed; in other words it has the same form as Foucault’s notion of counter-conduct. At the same time, however, this refusal to be governed is radically paired with, according to Stirner, a general aim not toward the forms of arrangements instituted after a revolution, but instead toward a radical position of autonomy, a position from which we might “arrange ourselves.” Taken together we can, following both Foucault and Stirner, begin to understand an ethical politics of resistance to governmentality in terms of an *insurrection of the self*. This insurrection of the self is itself a form of what anarchists refer to as direct action which, in refusing to be governed, prefigures anarchy in the ungovernable, a radical position of autonomy in which one is able to arrange oneself. While anarchism is most typically understood as a revolutionary theory that seeks the dissolution of the state, it is my contention that through Foucault we might amend this basic paradigm of anarchist theory and suggest that this ethical politics of resistance better characterizes anarchism as a fundamental withdrawal from the logic, practice, and domain of oikonomia.

The thematic of an ethical politics of resistance I have been developing through Foucault not only demands a reconsideration of the basis of an anarchist politics of resistance, but also how we resist the forms of governable subjectivities that link us to the state. In this way, we have seen how a Foucauldian theory of resistance refers not to a struggle with the state over power but, more specifically, to a struggle with the exercise of government; the politics of resistance as such is not characterized in terms of revolution, but as insurrection—an insurrection of conduct that attempts a fundamental rupture in the practices of government that connect us to the state. At the same time, however, this politics of resistance is itself paired with an ethics of revolt, a way of being through resistance that ultimately seeks a withdrawal from power in order to affirm an ungovernable position of autonomy. While Foucault claims that the politics of resistance to governmentality is itself ethical in its struggle toward new forms of subjectivity, this

¹¹³⁸ Ibid, 316.

ethical component of resistance is therefore ontological as well. Indeed, this insurrectionary ethical politics of resistance is what Newman refers to “ontological anarchism.”¹¹³⁹ By “ontological anarchism,” a term developed with regard to Foucault, Newman argues that an insurrectionary theory of politics of resistance is “primarily a form of ethical and political self-transformation...which seek[s] to foster autonomous relations and practices of outside power.”¹¹⁴⁰ Indeed, what is fostered or produced in the politics of resistance directed against the logic and practices of government is not necessarily the dissolution of the state, but radical positions of autonomy outside of power. This position of autonomy produced outside of power exercise as government is what Newman refers to, via Agamben, as the “ungovernable,” or the “anarchic dimension to life that exceeds and resists” the governable forms of subjectivity that connect individuals to the state.¹¹⁴¹ Yet, these ungovernable positions of autonomy formed in practices of resistance, and which form the basis of anarchist politics, also reveal a radical condition of freedom that forms the basis of what I have outlined as a permanent ethics of resistance. According to Newman, then, since “insurrection allows people to constitute their own freedom,” then it can further be maintained that a politics conceived as resistance “is the political articulation of ontological anarchy: a form of praxis which is not overdetermined by a project or *telos*, but which simply assumes and puts into practice the freedom we already have.”¹¹⁴² It is this form of freedom obtained through the practice of resistance that Foucault locates as the basic principle that grounds the notion of the permanent ethics of revolt.

While we have seen that a specific continuity can be drawn between the political and ethical through the concept of resistance, and furthermore that ethics is defined by Foucault as both a practice and way of being in the world, he also argues that this ethics of permanent resistance is itself to be conceived in terms of a radical practice of freedom. It is the concept of freedom, the condition proper to the domain of ethics, that Foucault argues has been missing from revolutionary movements. Thus, in a crucial interview from 1984 titled “The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom,” wherein

¹¹³⁹ Saul Newman, *Postanarchism* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2016), xii, 9-13.

¹¹⁴⁰ *Ibid*, xii.

¹¹⁴¹ *Ibid*, 18.

¹¹⁴² *Ibid*, 55.

the question of politics is directly tied to the questions of ethics in terms of a theory of resistance, Foucault further argues that this ethical theory of resistance reveals the problematic of freedom in new ways. It is in this way Foucault asks “for what is ethics, if not the practice of freedom, the conscious practice of freedom.”¹¹⁴³ In this way, the politics of resistance is, according to Foucault, an ethical practice of freedom. “Freedom,” Foucault therefore writes, “is the ontological condition of ethics.”¹¹⁴⁴ In Foucault’s thought, then, the practice of ethics requires a concept of freedom through which a critical ethos of revolt can be expressed—that is, ethics according to Foucault finds its basis and is expressed in the forms and practices of freedom manifest in the praxis of resistance. At the same time, it is this relation between ethics and the condition of freedom that Foucault conceives of as an inherently political problem. Thus “insofar as freedom...signifies non-slavery,” which Foucault acknowledges “is quite a different definition of freedom” from traditional notions, then the problem of ethics “is already entirely political.”¹¹⁴⁵ As a critical position of “non-slavery,” Foucauldian freedom is not to be conceived as *freedom from* but rather in terms of a condition of being-in-autonomy.

Thus, while we have seen that politics exercised as resistance to governmentality at once refers to an ethical and political practice of resistance toward autonomous self-transformation, the way in which Foucault defines freedom as a condition “non-slavery” adds a vital dimension to the intersection between politics, ethics, and resistance. Politics as resistance to governmentality is a perpetual striving toward a condition of non-slavery, and it is in this way that the question of freedom is problematized by Foucault as an ethos—indeed, an ethics of permanent resistance. While Foucault redefines politics as resistance to governmentality, with the practice of freedom as “non-slavery” forming the ontological precondition of ethics, he also redefines ethics in a unique manner consistent with his theory of the political. Resistance is, according to Foucault, an ethical practice of freedom—that is, a permanent ethic of revolt perpetually striving toward a condition in life of non-slavery and autonomous freedom. There is a real political possibility in this politics of resistance and ethics of revolt that not extends what I have referred to as

¹¹⁴³ Michel Foucault, “The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom,” 284.

¹¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 284.

¹¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 286.

anarchist hypothesis of the political that underpins Foucault's thought, but also the elaboration of an anarchist ethics of revolt, a permanent exercise in freedom through the practice of resistance, a specific art of not being governed that ruptures the logic of the archē.

6.4 An Anarchist Politics of Resistance Emerges as an Art of Not Being Governed

*Facing them head on and as compensation, or rather, as both partner and adversary to the arts of governing, as an act of defiance, as a challenge, as a way of limiting these arts of governing and sizing them up, transforming them, or finding a way to escape them...there would have been something born...a kind of general cultural form, both a political and moral attitude, a way of thinking...which I would simply call the art of not being governed.*¹¹⁴⁶

--Michel Foucault

The central challenge of this chapter has been to explore the ethical contours of Foucault's theory of resistance, and to further demonstrate how this permanent ethic of revolt at once reveals the political as a space of agonistic contestation and a position of autonomy outside of the logic and practices of governmentality. In this regard, the first goal of this chapter has been to trace how Foucault's turn toward the study of governmentality directly corresponds with a critical inquiry into the counter-historical movements of "counter-conduct," a unique form of resistance, and furthermore that it is through this notion of counter-conduct that Foucault redefines politics from the perspective of resistance. If, as I have argued throughout this project that resistance is primary with power and the political, it has been my contention in this chapter that Foucault clarifies this position in *Security, Territory, Population*, ultimately arguing not only that politics can be redefined as resistance, but also how politics is that which emerges in the condition of resistance to governmentality. By redefining politics as a movement of resistance against the logic and practice of governmentality, Foucault takes these movements of counter-conduct as a historical referent in which the political as agōn emerges in the form of an active resistance and open contestation with the exercise of

¹¹⁴⁶ Michel Foucault, "What is Critique?", 44-45.

power as government. Taking Foucault's theory of politics as resistance as a critical extension of his agonistic conception of the political, the second goal of this chapter was to outline the ways in which the politics of resistance as such forms the conceptual and practical nexus that connects the political and ethical periods of Foucault's thought. Indeed, as Foucault maintains in 1984, the connection between the political and ethical axes of his thought can be made in the following way: "the hinge point of ethical concerns and the political struggle" at once arises as a movement "against abusive techniques of government and research in ethics that seeks to ground individual freedom."¹¹⁴⁷ It is at the intersection between the movements of revolt against the practice of government and the struggle toward an ethos of freedom that Foucault reveals an alternative manner from which to rethink the question of resistance in terms of an ethic of revolt.

Furthermore, it has been my contention in this chapter that Foucault's redefinition of politics as a movement of resistance to governmentality corresponding with an ethics of revolt allows for a unique intersection to be staged between Foucault's turn toward ethics and anarchism. While I have maintained that Foucault's critical inquiries into power, politics, and governmentality all reveal the specificity of the primacy of resistance as the basis of what can be termed an anarchist hypothesis of the political, in this chapter we have seen how Foucault identifies anarchism as a key referent from which an ethical politics of resistance might be based. It has therefore been my contention that Foucault's conceptions of the politics of resistance and corresponding ethic of revolt revitalize the question of an anarchist politics of resistance in vital ways. Through Foucault we might suggest that anarchism—indeed anarchy—is elaborated not in terms of a revolution to come, but as a permanent ethos of resistance, a specific art of not being governed. This critical intersection between Foucault and anarchist thought reveals a real political possibility, a hidden locus that not only designates an active position of praxis in which power exercised as government can be confronted and possibly reversed, but also the elaboration of an ethos of revolt inseparable from a critical affirmation toward autonomous, ungovernable forms-of-life. Rather than a revolutionary struggle with or over state power, an insurrectionary ethos or art of not being governed is directed at what

¹¹⁴⁷ Michel Foucault, "The Ethics of the Concern for Self as a Practice of Freedom," 299.

Foucault refers to as the “political double bind” of power exercised as government, a form of revolt at once directed against the state and the government of individualization that connects us to the state. While we have seen that a certain consistency can be drawn between Foucault and anarchism in terms of rethinking politics as resistance to governmentality, there is also a specific continuity between his notion of an ethics of revolt and anarchist thought that has yet to be fully explored. In this regard, it has been my contention not only that Foucault begins to conceive politics—indeed, the politics of resistance—as a form of ethics, but that this ethical component to the politics of resistance helps to rethink an anarchist politics as a vital attempt to constitute an ethic of the self as an art of not being governed.

Although the notion of an anarchist ethics of resistance is often eclipsed by the discourses on politics, there have been several attempts at elaborating an anarchist ethics in which the question of the politics of resistance is explored and elaborated as an art of not being governed. In the final years of his life, Kropotkin attempted to complete a two-volume text that sought to provide a historical account of the emergence of ethics and forms of morality within the tradition of Western philosophy, while simultaneously outlining a specific correlation between an alternative ethics and anarchism. Although the *Ethics* was never completed, in an earlier work titled “Anarchist Morality,” Kropotkin sketched a preliminary outline of an ethics devoid of any normative or moral prescriptions imposed by authority, while further tracing a specific continuity between this notion of ethics and an anarchist praxis of resistance. According to Kropotkin, an anarchist ethics is to be elaborated not in terms of a Kantian “categorical imperative”—that is, a universal code that guides all action, but rather upon two mutually reinforcing principles: the principle of equality and the principle of non-governance. Indeed, “equality,” Kropotkin writes, is “the fundamental principle of anarchism,” while further concluding that “equity in all things...is anarchism in very deed.”¹¹⁴⁸ Yet, while the principle of equality is what forms the ethical basis of anarchism, the very condition of equality toward which anarchism strives can only become manifest in a meaningful way, according to Kropotkin, as a perpetual movement toward a principle of non-governance,

¹¹⁴⁸ Peter Kropotkin, “Anarchist Morality,” in *Anarchism: A Collection of revolutionary Writings*, ed. Roger Baldwin (New York: Dover Publications, 2002), 99.

a movement toward anarchy. For Kropotkin, then, the principle of equality directly corresponds with a principle of non-governance, a refusal to govern others that simultaneously turns upon a refusal to be governed in turn: “we do not wish to be ruled,” Kropotkin writes, and “by this very fact do we not declare that we ourselves wish to rule nobody?”¹¹⁴⁹ It is this principle of non-governance that forms the essence of an anarchist ethics. At the same time, however, the principle of non-governance leading to a condition of equality additionally corresponds with and forms the basic foundation of an agonistic praxis of resistance according to Kropotkin. Yet, instead of being premised on a theory of revolution, Kropotkin describes the politics of resistance as a process of becoming, a development of a critical ethos in which the refusal to govern and to be governed itself prefigures a radical condition of equality and anarchy. An anarchist ethics can be elaborated by developing an inextricable nexus between the principle of non-governance and that of equality; thus in Kropotkin’s words: “By becoming anarchists...we declare war against their way of acting, against their way of thinking...It is in the name of equality that we are determined to have no more...exploited, deceived, and governed men and women.”¹¹⁵⁰ Like Foucault, Kropotkin understands the politics of resistance as a struggle in life against the government of conduct, an insurrectionary revolt of conduct struggling against “their way of acting;” yet, in Kropotkin’s understanding this struggle is both premised upon and leads to a condition of equality. Crucially, however, what Kropotkin outlines here as the two principles that animate an anarchist politics of resistance is to be elaborated as an ethos, a specific process of becoming-ungovernable in a condition of equality. In other words, what Kropotkin understands as ethics describes a form of praxis in which the principles of non-governance and equality are elaborated as an art of not being governed, or a process of *becoming-anarchy*.

Similar to Kropotkin, Emma Goldman also recognized the importance of elaborating an ethical basis to the politics of resistance: “to divest one’s methods of ethical concepts” Goldman laments will ultimately lead to the failure of anarchist

¹¹⁴⁹ Ibid, 98.

¹¹⁵⁰ Ibid, 99.

thought.¹¹⁵¹ Indeed, anarchism according to Goldman ought to be understood as a specific process of becoming, an ethic of revolt in which one transforms one's self and one's conditions by developing an ethos of counter-conduct. It is in this way that Goldman argues strongly that an anarchist politics of resistance cannot be a "violent change of social conditions through which one social class, the working class, becomes dominant over another class," as is the case in traditional Marxist and some anarchist discourses on revolution.¹¹⁵² Because it is directed at the state as a physical object that can be overturned, traditional theories of revolution according to Goldman are only the "conception of a purely physical change," and as such "involves only political scene shifting and institutional rearrangements."¹¹⁵³ While Goldman acknowledges that "[r]evolution is indeed violent," she further contends that the essential task of an anarchist politics of resistance is not a struggle over power, but the elaboration of an insurrectionary ethos of revolt, or a "*fundamental transvaluation of values*" (original italics).¹¹⁵⁴ By a "transvaluation of values," a concept that has its origins in Nietzsche's philosophy,¹¹⁵⁵ Goldman means to suggest something akin to Foucault's notion of counter-conduct, in which revolt seeks a fundamental change in one's subjectivity. For Goldman, then, a "transvaluation of values" ushers in a "transformation of the basic relations of man to man, and of man to society"—that is, the basis of an "NEW ETHICS, [sic] inspiring...a new concept of life and its manifestation in social relationships."¹¹⁵⁶ By conceiving an anarchist politics of resistance in terms of ethical change in one's self and one's relations to others, Goldman adopts a position similar to Foucault in which the refusal of the self is paired with the affirmation of becoming ungovernable. As a "transvaluation of values" instead of a revolutionary struggle over power, the politics of resistance according to Goldman is an exercise in what Foucault refers to as counter-conduct—that is, anarchism is a movement in life that seeks to escape the logic of

¹¹⁵¹ Emma Goldman, "The Transvaluation of Values," in *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas, Volume One, From Anarchy to Anarchism*, ed. Robert Graham (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2005), 315.

¹¹⁵² Ibid, 315.

¹¹⁵³ Ibid, 315.

¹¹⁵⁴ Ibid, 317.

¹¹⁵⁵ The notion of a "transvaluation of values" is developed by Nietzsche in *The Antichrist*, trans. Anthony Ludovici (New York: Prometheus Books, 2000), 107.

¹¹⁵⁶ Emma Goldman, "The Transvaluation of Values," 317.

governmentality, a revolt against the ways in which one is governed paired with a radical transformation in life through resistance.

Through Kropotkin and Goldman there is a position nearly analogous to Foucault's claim in "The Subject and Power" in which the politics of resistance pertains less to the state, but a struggle against the government of individualization linked to the state. It is this art of not being governed elaborated in both Foucault and anarchism that opens new possibilities from which to resist the logic and practices of the governmentalization of the state. Indeed, in reconceiving politics as a movement of resistance to governmentality paired with an ethic of revolt in which the struggle towards new forms of subjectivity within a space of autonomous freedom, that is, towards conditions of non-slavery and ungovernability, Foucault ultimately adopts a position quite similar to that of the German anarchist Gustav Landauer. Like Foucault, Landauer criticized Marxist and anarchists alike for regarding the state as a physical object or "thing...that one can smash in order to destroy."¹¹⁵⁷ Rather than conceiving the state as a physical object that can be overturned or destroyed, Landauer instead argues that the "state is a relationship between human beings, a way in which people relate to one another."¹¹⁵⁸ In other words, the state according Landauer is a social relation akin to Foucault's notion of the government of conduct. It is this conception of the state as "relationship between human beings" that Landauer locates an alternative way from which to rethink the basis of an anarchist politics. Anarchism will not destroy the state, as Landauer suggests, by overturning its power; instead just as Foucault maintains that the object of resistance is directed toward the production of new forms of subjectivity, Landauer argues that "one destroys the state by entering into other relationships, by behaving differently to one another."¹¹⁵⁹ In this way, the object of resistance according to Landauer is not, in essence, manifest in a revolutionary struggle against the state, but rather in the attempt to "separate themselves from the state" by creating new ways of conduct and relations between others.¹¹⁶⁰ Herein lies the key for an anarchist politics of

¹¹⁵⁷ Gustav Landauer, "Destroying the State by Creating Socialism," in *Anarchism: A Documentary History of Libertarian Ideas, Volume One, From Anarchy to Anarchism*, ed. Robert Graham (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 2005), 165.

¹¹⁵⁸ Ibid, 165.

¹¹⁵⁹ Ibid, 165.

¹¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 165.

resistance according to Landauer: “weaker and weaker will be the state power, the governing principle...if only the people begin to constitute themselves outside the state.”¹¹⁶¹ This is to say that for Landauer, the object of an anarchist politics of resistance is a radical withdrawal of oneself from the state by entering into different relations with others, an ethic of counter-conduct that at once involves a position of voluntary inservitude and a perpetual striving toward a condition of autonomy, freedom, and equality in life. An ethics of revolt based in the practices of freedom, autonomy, equality, and non-governance, is not a new set of moral values, but an ethos, a way of being in the world through resistance, a strategy of withdrawal and desertion oriented toward overcoming the constituent power of the state by constituting ungovernable forms of life outside of the state; it is an *art of not being governed, an ethic of becoming-ungovernable, a certain continuity between existence and resistance that allows the conditions of anarchy to emerge.*

¹¹⁶¹ Ibid, 164-165.

Conclusion

From Revolution to Resistance: Destituent Politics as an Art of Not Being Governed

*Resistance is the motor of history. Again and again we revolt against everything that exploits, oppresses, outrages, and depresses us; again and again our revolts are reabsorbed, becoming new conventions, new confines, new systems of control. Buried in the sedimentary layers of our ancestor's defeat it's easy to forget what produced these structures and can tear them down again: our great unruliness.*¹¹⁶²

--Crimethinc Ex-Workers Collective

*Politics is about the movement between no power and state power, and it takes place through the creation of...a space of resistance and opposition to government.*¹¹⁶³

--Simon Critchley

In a manner that echoes the core logic of Foucault's fifth thesis from the *History of Sexuality*, "anarchy," writes Peter Gelderloos, "thrives in the struggle against domination, and wherever oppression exists, resistance exists also."¹¹⁶⁴ In this sense, anarchy is not understood as a post-revolutionary condition following a total eradication of the state, government, and capitalism, but rather as that which emerges as *agōn*, a condition brought about in the forms of struggle against power in all its manifestations. Anarchy as such is neither prior nor anterior to the forms of power against which it struggles. Instead, rather, anarchism in the sense I have been elaborating throughout this study takes as its basis and emerges from the logic that "wherever oppression exists, resistance exists." As a correlative to this logic, "anarchy"—that is, a condition of being-without-government—is what is historically expressed in the forms of resistance to power. In other words, Foucault's thesis "where there is power, there is resistance" designates the principal logic central to anarchism. Beginning with a critical inquiry into the reasons why the field of the political is traditionally elaborated in the archic nexus between government and state sovereignty, the purpose of this study has examined the possibilities of elaborating an alternative theory of the political in the intersections

¹¹⁶² The Crimethinc. Ex-Workers Collective, *Rolling Thunder: An Anarchist Journal of Dangerous Living*, 5 (2008): 1.

¹¹⁶³ Simon Critchley, *The Faith of the Faithless*, 232-233.

¹¹⁶⁴ Peter Gelderloos, *Anarchy Works* (California: Ardent Press, 2010), 266.

between Foucault's theory of resistance and anarchism. In doing so, the aim of this study was to shift the site of politics away from the traditional archic paradigms of government and sovereignty toward the logic of the primacy of resistance. Taking the primacy of resistance as the concept that reveals the history of the political in its agonistic specificity, it has been my contention that Foucault rethinks the political anarchically—that is, rather than reducing the question of politics to the archic expressions of government and sovereign power, Foucault maintains that the field of the political is historically expressed as agōn, a permanent dynamic of struggle between power and resistance. Consequently, however, because resistance designates a permanent component that can never be eradicated from the field of the political, it is the primacy of resistance and not the continuation of power that gives the political its form and historicity as such. In this regard, it has been my contention that the critical attempts to reopen a space for political praxis situated at the horizon of the state and government hinge on a unique relationship between Foucault's philosophy of resistance and anarchism.

In establishing a vital intersection between Foucault and anarchism through the logic of the primacy of resistance, the central challenge of this study has been to rethink the question of politics in a way that transcends the Aristotelian and Schmittian paradigms, and thus to gesture toward an alternative set of principles for a theory of the political opposed to, and autonomous from, the models of politics expressed in the forms of power exercised as sovereignty and government. This alternative, agonistic theory of politics is what I have referred to throughout this project as an *anarchist hypothesis of the political*, in which the primacy of resistance ruptures the logic of the archē and redesignates the field of the political as an insurgent topology of struggle and contestation. Following a discussion, via Aristotle and Schmitt, pertaining to the ways in which the question of politics has traditionally been reduced to the first principle of an archē, I then outlined how certain critical turns in political theory and philosophy such as metapolitics and postanarchism have set the tone for beginning to rethink the political and the question of politics in a way that gestures toward a fundamental return to the study of anarchism, while highlighting how this alternative understanding of politics ultimately turns upon the question of resistance. In this regard, chapter two sought to

reintroduce anarchism in a manner that prefigures the postanarchist and metapolitical attempts to locate a theory of the political irreducible to the state, as well as a corresponding form of politics as resistance that could never assume the form of an *oikonomia*. The goal here was at once to consider anarchism as a distinct form of political philosophy that relocates the question of politics in the fundamental distinction between government and resistance, as well as to demonstrate how the concept of resistance is not only what animates an agonistic conception of the political as such, but the condition of anarchy as well. Tracing the concept of anarchy as a philosophical principle that affirms an alternative starting point for a critical theory of the political, as a historico-political principle in which the history of the political is retheorized as a permanent domain of agonistic struggle, and as a paradigm of politics as resistance it has been my contention that anarchism asserts a theory of the political through the unique question of resistance. Taken together, the first two chapters were set inform the historical, philosophical, and political context in which Foucault's thought can best be situated, and from which my own study of the radical political possibilities brought to light in the intersection between Foucault's theory of resistance and anarchism proceeds.

By situating the question of politics and the political at the horizon of the state and the exercise of government, it has been my contention that anarchist political theory fundamentally turns upon an alternative theory of the political, in which what is ultimately presupposed is not the primacy of the first principle of government, but a critical caesura between the political as *archē* and an insurgent, agonistic conception of the political. It is in the context of the anarchist tradition, or rather in the critical tradition that attempts to rethink the terms of the political and the question of politics from the perspective of resistance in which the full potential of Foucault's studies of power, politics, and governmentality can be realized. In this regard, chapter three sought to introduce and highlight the importance of the concept of resistance to Foucault's thought through the corresponding notion of "critique," while further emphasizing how this notion of critique designates an inimitable approach to the study of the political. Beginning with what Foucault refers to as "anarchaeology," a unique approach to the study of politics that begins anarchically—that is, a critical methodology that takes as its starting point the "non-necessity of all power of whatever kind"—I maintained that such

approach ultimately reveals the agonistic dimension specific to the history of the political.¹¹⁶⁵ Rather than beginning with the first principle of the *archē*, and thus that politics can be reducible to the techniques of government exercised within the domain of a state, Foucault instead reveals how politics is historically expressed agonistically in the permanent struggle between power exercised as government and the counter-historical movements of resistance manifest in terms of an “art of not being governed.” Taking a critical elaboration of this “art of not being governed” as the conceptual key central to Foucault’s project, the following chapter introduced what I refer to as the *primacy of resistance*—via the fifth thesis on power from *The History of Sexuality*—as the conceptual nexus through which Foucault’s study of power, politics, and the history of the political can be understood in their anarchic and agonistic specificity. With the primacy of resistance designating the conceptual key required in Foucault’s analytic of power, I argued that the condition of possibility of power relations and the field of the political turn upon the permanent potentiality of resistance, and further that this potential for revolt is what allows for power relations to be transformed into a form of agonistic struggle.

Focusing more directly on the question of politics, chapter five outlined a specific nexus between the power/resistance dynamic and Foucault’s war analytic of politics and the political. While in Hobbes the condition of possibility of politics coincides with the eradication of the condition of war from the field of the political, I argued here that in Foucault’s reading of the *Leviathan* it is the permanence of “civil war,” or stasis, that gives the field of the political its agonistic specificity and allows for politics to emerge as a paradigm of resistance. My central claim here is that just as resistance is primary with power for Foucault, the war model of the political asserts that resistance is also primary with the history of politics. In the final chapter, I argued that rather than constituting a distinct break with his earlier studies in power and politics, Foucault’s turn towards the study of ethics in his final works reveals how his agonistic conception of politics as resistance is itself animated by a critical ethos of revolt. Taking the ethical concept of “counter-conduct” as the key term by which Foucault redefines politics as resistance to power exercised as government, my claim here was that Foucault’s ethical turn ought to

¹¹⁶⁵ Michel Foucault, *On the Government of the Living*, 79; 78.

be understood as an attempt to locate a continuity between a form of ethics that animates his theory of resistance, and a form of politics as resistance that coincides with a radical, permanent ethics of revolt, a distinct way of being in the world through resistance—that is, a specific art of not being governed. While the primacy of resistance reveals an anarchist hypothesis of the political in terms of a permanent struggle between the exercise of power and the counter-movements of resistance—the corresponding ethos of revolt through which politics emerges as resistance is elaborated in terms of an art of not being governed.

Social Revolution or Resistance?

While Foucault's theory of resistance forms an indispensable reference through which the question of politics and the history of the political can be rethought agonistically, it has been my contention that this conception of politics reopens up the space for an anarchist theory of politics as resistance. Indeed, while Foucault's project shifts the question of politics from power to resistance, a critical theory of anarchism emerges in this space between the primacy of resistance and the art of not being governed. In this regard, the aim of this concluding chapter is to explore the emergence of a new ethical terrain and political logic from which the question of resistance in anarchist political theory might be rethought neither as a revolutionary overthrow of power, nor in terms of an anarchy-to-come, but rather as an art of not being governed, a certain continuity between life and resistance, in which the condition of anarchy arises not in the revolutionary overthrow of the state, but in the process of *becoming-ungovernable*. In this regard, it is my contention that Foucault's theory of resistance helps renew and revitalize the specific contours of an anarchist politics emerging as resistance.

Nevertheless, in articulating an anarchist politics of resistance in terms of an art of not being governed, rather than the traditional concept of social revolution, my approach to the question of resistance within the anarchist tradition appears at odds with certain anarchist theorists such as Murray Bookchin who argues that the “polymorphous concepts of resistance are eroding the socialist character of the libertarian tradition.”¹¹⁶⁶

¹¹⁶⁶ Murray Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm* (California: AK Press, 1995), 9.

Indeed, the intersection staged throughout this study between anarchism and Foucault in terms of the primacy of resistance invites a return to the polemic debate initiated in Bookchin's 1995 text, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism: An Unbridgeable Chasm*. While Bookchin's argument is premised on what he views as the irreconcilable difference between politics conceived as resistance and politics conceived as revolution—that is, between “lifestyle anarchism” and “social anarchism”—his critique is important in the context of my study since the eradication of social anarchism traced in this text is attributed, in large, to the spread of Foucault's ideas and works.¹¹⁶⁷ In returning to Bookchin's debate, my intention is neither to resolve the tension he establishes between the individualist and communalist forms of anarchism, nor to advocate for a “lifestyle anarchism” as such. Instead, by way of concluding this study, my intention is to explore how the dichotomy Bookchin establishes between *resistance* and *social revolution* illustrates the ways in which the latter concept reproduces the logic of the archē and a form of praxis that tends to conceive of politics in terms of power rather than a theory of resistance as developed throughout this study. Although I do not maintain, as does Bookchin, an irreconcilable difference between the so-called individualist and social traditions of anarchism, instead preferring Goldman's notion that there is “no conflict between the individual and the social,”¹¹⁶⁸ it is necessary to turn to his critique of Foucault in order to highlight the ways in which the possibility of an anarchist politics today emerges as an art of not being governed, a form of resistance which rejects the institutional, universal, and totalizing aspects of social revolutionary theory and, in doing so, elaborates a form of politics that could never assume the form of an archē.

¹¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 9. Although Bookchin's polemic against lifestyle anarchism is situated in the wider context of a critique of Foucault, this text is not his most sustained critique of the latter's ideas. For a more direct critique of Foucault's thought see: Murray Bookchin, *Reenchanting Humanity: A Defense of the Human Spirit Against Anti-Humanism, Misanthropy, Mysticism, and Primitivism* (New York: Cassell, 1995), 172-186. Herein, Bookchin suggests that Foucault's analytic of power fails insofar as it does not distinguish between power as domination and an institutional counter-power that might resist the state's management of society. For Bookchin, then what Foucault's analytic of power neglects to theorize is the possibility of the “*liberatory* use of power...indispensable for creating a society based on self-management...in short, *free institutions*.” (original emphasis, 183).

¹¹⁶⁸ Emma Goldman, “Anarchism: What it Really Stands For,” 38.

Written in the context of a critique of contemporary anarchist ideas and movements of resistance, Bookchin begins his polemic by arguing that anarchism's failure to achieve any wide-spread revolutionary changes within society can be fully explained by the "emergence of a phenomenon in Euro-American anarchism that cannot be ignored: the spread of individualist anarchism."¹¹⁶⁹ Following the development throughout the 1960's of what Bookchin refers to as the rise of "anarchic counter-culture," his text is written as a polemic against the ways in which these counter-cultural movements tend to reproduce a new form of anarcho-individualism, or what he pejoratively refers to as "lifestyle anarchism."¹¹⁷⁰ Although the individualist and socialist schools of anarchist thought have often coincided, Bookchin's text argues that anarchism has traditionally "developed in the tension between two basically contradictory tendencies: a personalistic commitment to individual *autonomy* and a collectivist commitment to social *freedom*" (original emphasis).¹¹⁷¹ It is in this division between autonomy and freedom, between the individualist and social tendencies, that Bookchin maintains "there exists a divide that cannot be bridged."¹¹⁷² Given that anarchists tend to emphasize both autonomy and freedom, Bookchin's distinction should be rejected. Nevertheless, at stake in Bookchin's critique is not to seek a fundamental reconciliation between the individual and social traditions of anarchism, but rather to critically oppose the difference between the ways in which the question of politics is treated in each of these traditions. In illustrating a divide between the "anarchic" counter-cultural movements and traditional anarchism, it is clear that Bookchin privileges a rigid, universal conceptualization of anarcho-syndicalism, or what he often euphemistically refers to as "democratic communalism."¹¹⁷³ This form of "traditional anarchism"—which is the *only* real form of anarchism for Bookchin—must adhere to four basic tenets in order to be considered anarchist as such: "a confederation of decentralized municipalities; an unwavering opposition to statism; a belief in direct democracy; and a vision of a libertarian communist society."¹¹⁷⁴

¹¹⁶⁹ Murray Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism*, 8.

¹¹⁷⁰ *Ibid*, 9.

¹¹⁷¹ *Ibid*, 4.

¹¹⁷² *Ibid*, 54.

¹¹⁷³ *Ibid*, 56.

¹¹⁷⁴ *Ibid*, 60.

While it is clear that Bookchin's polemic against lifestyle anarchism attempts to reinvigorate what he understands as a more traditional anarchism of the past, his critique of anarchic counter-cultural forms of resistance nevertheless betrays some of his other works in which he rejects the antiquated model of the proletariat as the locus of struggle, while analyzing counter-cultural movements toward new forms of community as the key fulcrum of resistance in contemporary society.¹¹⁷⁵ Nevertheless, with these basic tenets, it is clear that Bookchin understands anarchism from a much different perspective than the one elaborated throughout this project. Since the first premise designates the alternative form of political praxis that animates Bookchin's critique of the state-form, anarchism in this sense can be situated in relation to the key question that animates the political works of Plato and Aristotle—that is, a future vision of how society ought to best be organized, and a coinciding programme for implementing the management of such a society. In other words anarchism, in the sense Bookchin, attributes to it designates a theory of politics in which an institutional counter-power (albeit in a non-statist and decentralized form) might be implemented as an alternative to the state. At stake in Bookchin's critique is less the question of resistance than of a return to a classical conception of politics understood as a certain exercise and distribution of power. In Bookchin, then, the notion of a social revolution refers not to a struggle against, but toward, power—indeed, a struggle toward the development of an institutionalized counter-power that counter-acts and displaces the power of the state. To be sure, Bookchin conceives of power as the very substance of politics. As Bookchin maintains elsewhere, politics designates a choice between power possessed by the people or power possessed by the state: “Power that is not retained by the people is power that is given over to the state.”¹¹⁷⁶ Insofar as Bookchin's theory of politics understands power as the substance of the political in which the development of a series of counter-institutions might come to countervail the power of the state, such a theory therefore requires, as

¹¹⁷⁵ For example, see: Murray Bookchin, “New Social Movements: The Anarchic Dimension,” in *For Anarchism: History, Theory, and Practice*, ed. David Goodway (New York: Routledge, 1989), 259-274. Also see: Murray Bookchin, *Social Ecology and Communalism* (California: AK Press, 2006), 55-56.

¹¹⁷⁶ Murray Bookchin, “The New Municipal Agenda,” in *The Murray Bookchin Reader*, ed. Janet Biehl (Montreal: Black Rose Books, 1999), 193.

Bookchin suggests, a “recovery of a classical conception of politics.”¹¹⁷⁷ Such a return to a classical conception of politics is set by Bookchin to describe what he refers to as the “*democratic* dimension of anarchism,” in which politics is exercised in terms of a “majoritarian administration of the public sphere”—that is, in terms of an *oikonomia*.¹¹⁷⁸ While Bookchin attempts to eradicate the state from the field of the political, the development of an institutional counter-power nevertheless still turns upon the problem of government as the locus through which politics is exercised.

I need not go into extensive detail here regarding a discussion of Bookchin’s commitment to so-called traditional anarchism; instead what is important is the decisive division he draws between politics conceived as resistance and politics conceived as a social revolution. Indeed, it is in the context of a form of politics expressed as resistance—which Bookchin worries is in danger of supplanting the notion of social revolution—that the critique of Foucault which drives his text is situated. Although Bookchin is not a particularly strong reader of Foucault, he nevertheless draws an immediate correspondence between “lifestyle anarchism” and the latter’s theory of resistance. Bookchin writes:

Consciously or not, many lifestyle anarchists articulate Michel Foucault’s approach of “personal insurrection” rather than social revolution, premised as it is on an ambiguous and cosmic critique of power as such rather than on a demand for the *institutionalized* empowerment of the oppressed (original emphasis).¹¹⁷⁹

¹¹⁷⁷ Ibid, 196. Also see Murray Bookchin’s description of politics in his final book *Social Ecology and Communalism*, 57-60. Here Bookchin maintains a clear distinction between state power and politics, and suggests that radical political theory therefore requires a more expansive redefinition of what is meant by the term politics. While Bookchin acknowledges that a traditional conception of politics is often reducible to a theory of statecraft, he clarifies that the term “*politics* means the management of the community or *polis* by its members, the citizens” (60). While Bookchin’s redefinition shifts the site of politics away from its sovereign locus in the state to the collective power of the people, the very activity of politics remains the same in both its statist and non-statist forms. Politics, in the sense Bookchin attributes to the term, therefore designates a non-statist theory of an *oikonomia*, which is to say a particular form of governing communities. Thus, although Bookchin’s attempted return at a classical conception of politics replaces the state with the people as the site of the political, the very question of politics can only be dealt with in terms of developing an institutional counter-power that challenges the state.

¹¹⁷⁸ Murray Bookchin, *Social Anarchism or Lifestyle Anarchism*, 57.

¹¹⁷⁹ Ibid, 10. Given how Bookchin maintains that one of the key characteristics of lifestyle anarchism is that it “bears a disdain for theory,” it seems strange that he invokes Foucault as the spokesperson for such a movement (11).

While Bookchin's critique is less a critical assessment of Foucault's work than a self-reflexive nostalgic affirmation of an 'authentic' anarchism of the past, what is at stake in this passage is the contrast Bookchin posits between Foucault's conception of politics as "insurrection" and the traditional notion of "social revolution." While Foucault never uses the term "personal insurrection," Bookchin's critique is at once directed against this conception of politics as insurrection, as well as how the question of "resistance" within this conception of politics "becomes entirely polymorphous."¹¹⁸⁰ At stake in Bookchin's critique, however, is less the distinction between insurrection and revolution, than the ways in which Foucault's theory of resistance refuses to ascribe to a unifying logic from which a politics of resistance could assume the form of a universal "social revolution." Because Foucault neither presupposes a universal character that binds all forms of resistance to a particular ideology, nor a singular, all-encompassing form of revolt from which the politics of resistance might assume the form of an institutional counter-power, Bookchin argues that there can be no possibility of revolution—and thus no possibility of anarchism—in Foucault. To demonstrate this point, Bookchin cites part of Foucault's fifth thesis in order to demonstrate how a "polymorphous" conception of resistance fundamentally eradicates the chance of a communal form of anarchism. "Foucault," Bookchin argues, "fosters a perspective that 'resistance is never in position to power...Hence there is no single [read: universal] locus of Great refusal'" (Bookchin's brackets).¹¹⁸¹

As indicated in the above passage from *The History of Sexuality*, what Bookchin takes issue with is how Foucault's theory of resistance appears to exclude a certain universality through which individual revolts might be redirected toward a collective vision of how society could best be arranged. For Bookchin, then, if "anarchism" is to "resolutely retain its character as a *social* movement," then it must be "*programmatic*" (original emphasis).¹¹⁸² In other words, Bookchin's understanding of social revolution is prescriptive in regard to both the specific form revolt must assume, as well as a teleological prescription of how society must be organized in line with a particular

¹¹⁸⁰ Ibid, 11.

¹¹⁸¹ Ibid, 10.

¹¹⁸² Ibid, 60.

ideology. In his critique of Foucault's theory of resistance, Bookchin reveals his own nostalgia for what he views as a more traditional understanding of politics, in which anarchism designates the institutional development of a counter-power that rivals the state. More critically, it is my contention that what is revealed in Bookchin's polemic against "lifestyle anarchism" reproduces the logic of the archē anarchism opposes.

While a lot more could be said about Bookchin's polemic against "lifestyle anarchism," it is my contention that if radical political theory is to avoid the logic of the archē traced throughout this study, that an anarchist theory of resistance ought to both resist a politics of program, as well as a prescriptive theory of how society ought to be arranged when one is freed from government. In other words, an anarchist theory of resistance must be rethought anarchically, and thus against the traditional notion of social revolution. Because Bookchin works squarely within a classical conception of politics, his theory of social revolution is less a theory of resistance, than a theory of power—that is, "municipalist confederal power to countervail the state."¹¹⁸³ Yet as I have maintained throughout this study, power is to be resolutely distinguished from politics, wherein the latter can only be understood on condition of the permanent potential of resistance. In this regard, it has been my contention that politics is not what takes place in a struggle toward power or in a revolutionary confrontation for a new order, but that which, in its agonistic specificity, emerges as a paradigm of resistance, a particular art of not being governed which, in withdrawing from power, could never assume the form of an archē. While such a conception does not necessarily exclude the idea of revolution, what is to be resisted is what Foucault refers to as the "pure law of the revolutionary" which, in prescribing not only the form revolt ought to take, but also how society ought to be organized, relocates the paradigm of the archē in the notion of revolution itself.¹¹⁸⁴

Indeed, in a review of André Glucksmann's 1977 text *The Master Thinkers*, Foucault invokes the example of the Gulag to explain the fundamental logic inherent in revolutionary discourse. "In the Gulag," Foucault writes, "one sees not the consequences of an unhappy mistake, but the effects of the 'truest' of theories in the political order."¹¹⁸⁵

¹¹⁸³ Ibid, 60.

¹¹⁸⁴ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 96.

¹¹⁸⁵ Michel Foucault, cited in, *The Passion of Michel Foucault* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1993), 296.

The horrors that occurred in relation to Stalin's revolutionary ideal, call into question, for Foucault, the very logic of revolution itself and not just Stalin's alleged (mis)interpretation of it. Anarchism, of course, has produced no Gulag of its own. Yet, what is particularly striking in Foucault's critique, is how the logic of revolution is intimately bound to the logic of the state, and thus that its very possibility always runs the risk of collapsing into a form of authoritarian biopolitics. Thus, while Foucault maintains in *The History of Sexuality* that it is the "strategic codification of these points of resistances that makes a revolution possible," we have seen how he laments in conclusion that this possibility of turning resistance into revolution is in fact "somewhat similar to the way in which the state relies on the institutional integration of power relationships."¹¹⁸⁶ Indeed, herein lies the political aporia traditional thinkers such as Bookchin have never been able to overcome; a revolutionary politics is a form of politics that can only be instituted as archē; while the state emerges as a paradigm of the archē, revolution reintroduces the archē in the institution of a new order. It is this fundamental nexus that links the politics of the state to the politics of revolution through the paradigm of the archē that has yet to be fully thought through in the anarchist tradition. In this regard, rather than an anarchist theory of the political based in a universal logic of class struggle, in which politics is conceived as revolutionary overthrow of state power, it is my contention that what is required by anarchist philosophy is not only an alternative theory of the political in which resistance, rather than power, designates the emergence of politics, but also an anarchist theory of agonistic resistance in which politics refers to an insurrectionary withdrawal from power. Such a form of politics can only be elaborated as an art of not being governed, a movement in life which, in refusing to constitute itself as power, prefigures the condition of anarchy in the ungovernable.

Destituent Politics and the Art of Not Being Governed

Although anarchism is by no means reducible to a theory of revolution, insofar as the notion of social revolution is often privileged as the dominant expression of an anarchist politics, it might be stated that problem of the archē has never been fully eradicated from

¹¹⁸⁶ Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality*, 96.

revolutionary discourse and praxis. Indeed, inasmuch as anarchism has sought to articulate a politics of resistance in terms of revolution, anarchist theory has never been able to overcome the aporia that lies at the basis of this conception of politics; indeed, in attempting to realize anarchy through the revolution, the conceptual impasse anarchist theory has yet to overcome is how to realize anarchism without either reproducing the archē in the institution of a new order, or in the sovereign biopolitical logic that takes the elimination of one's adversaries as the means of creating and maintaining a social revolution. Although anarchists have attempted to rethink the possibility of revolution by distinguishing social revolution from the Marxist notion of a political revolution, the question of how to realize anarchism without reterritorializing on the problem of power has never been fully solved. Thus when Alexander Berkman attempts to theorize a form of revolution that "seeks to alter the whole character of society," he concludes that such a "*social revolution*...would have to fight not only government and capitalism, but it would also meet with opposition of popular ignorance and prejudice, those who believe in government and capitalism" (original emphasis).¹¹⁸⁷ If, then, a social revolution requires not only a struggle against government and capitalism, but also a struggle against "those who believe in government and capitalism," Berkman is forced to ask "how is it then to come about?"¹¹⁸⁸ To be sure, anarchist theory has yet to figure out how to realize anarchism without having to eliminate not just the exercise of power, but those whose beliefs and ways of being differ from the truths held by anarchists themselves.

Indeed, insofar as a certain equivalence can be drawn between the state and revolution this is because both fundamentally turn upon instituting a specific form of *constituent power*. Thus, in order to rethink of a form of politics that could never assume the form of an archē, it is my contention that an anarchist politics of resistance can no longer be understood as a process of revolution—that is, of constituent power—but rather as *destitution*. While Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt have attempted to affirm the relation between constituent power¹¹⁸⁹ and a form of revolutionary praxis within the

¹¹⁸⁷ Alexander Berkman, "The ABC of Anarchism," 304.

¹¹⁸⁸ Ibid, 304.

¹¹⁸⁹ On their particular understanding of the concept of constituent power, see: Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Labor of Dionysus* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); and Antonio Negri, *Insurgencies* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999).

universal revolutionary subjectivity they refer to as the “multitude,”¹¹⁹⁰ it is in Agamben’s work that the conception of a destituent politics emerges as an anarchic paradigm of resistance.¹¹⁹¹ As we will see, what Agamben and The Invisible Committee refer to as destituent power invites a unique way to understand how the question of resistance in Foucault emerges as an art of not being governed rather than social revolution. At the same time, however, what is at stake in this theory of destitution is not a return to the question of how to realize an anarchist vision of society, but rather a return to the relation between the politics of resistance and an ethos of revolt, a movement in life which contests the state and government not by overturning one form of power with another, but by withdrawing from its grasp. It rejecting the traditional notion of an anarchist social revolution, it would be a mistake to affirm a politics of “lifestyle” in the sense Bookchin understands the term. Nevertheless, in as much as anarchism seeks a transformation in one’s conditions and life, it seems that a theory of resistance necessitates a theory of life, not in terms of prescribing how one ought to live, but as an ethos of revolt, a way of being in the world through resistance.

In a lecture titled “Elements for a Theory of Destituent Power” Agamben outlines how the question of constituent power designates a specific paradox that connects the logic of sovereignty to revolutionary praxis, through the paradigm of the *archē*. Yet, the general thrust of Agamben’s lecture is that the nexus that links sovereignty to revolution through constituent power requires a radical rethinking of a form of politics that could never assume the form of an *archē*, a form of politics he refers to as “destituent power.”¹¹⁹² Here Agamben analyzes Walter Benjamin’s short work “Critique of Violence,” and maintains that it is with Benjamin that the notion of a destituent politics emerges as an anarchic paradigm of resistance. Agamben reads Benjamin’s essay as an

¹¹⁹⁰ See: Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt, *Multitude: War and Democracy in the Age of Empire*, 351. Acknowledging that the concept of constituent power might be bound to the paradigm of sovereignty, Hardt and Negri nevertheless rearticulate the concept in way that highlights its very nexus with Schmittian sovereignty. “Constituent power,” according to Hardt and Negri, refers to the “power of the multitude and its decision-making capacity.” At best, Hardt and Negri attempt to render common the “decision-making capacity” of the sovereign. Yet, the core of Schmitt’s argument remains the same; constituent power is a form of sovereign power, whether shared or common.

¹¹⁹¹ See: Giorgio Agamben, “Elements for a Theory of Destituent Power,” trans. Stephanie Wakefield. (2013), 1-13 <https://livingtogetherintheheartofthedesert.files.wordpress.com/2014/02/agamben-elements-for-a-theory-of-destituent-power-1.pdf>. (accessed August 2, 2016), 1-19.

¹¹⁹² Ibid, 10.

attempt to reserve a space for the possibility of a form of political violence fundamentally distinct from, and outside of, the constituent power, that links revolutionary violence together with state sovereignty. This form of violence which does not reproduce the logic of sovereignty is what Benjamin refers as “pure,” or “divine violence.”¹¹⁹³ In Benjamin’s essay, the nexus that connects the problem of sovereignty to revolutionary praxis is laid bare in the distinction he draws between constituted power and constituting power. While constituted power designates a form of “law-preserving violence” and refers to a form of power inseparable from a pre-established state power, both sovereignty and revolution are examples of a form of constituting power, or “law-making power.”¹¹⁹⁴ By positing an inherent link between sovereignty and revolution in terms of “law-making,” or constituting power, Benjamin’s point is to demonstrate how both notions ultimately turn upon the same modes of political praxis, or violence. For Benjamin, if an inherent nexus can be made that connects sovereignty to the logic of revolutionary praxis, this is because:

the function of violence in law-making is twofold, in the sense that lawmaking pursues as its end, with violence as the means, *what* is to be established as law, but at the moment of instatement does not dismiss violence; rather, at this very moment of lawmaking, it specifically establishes as law not an unalloyed by violence, but one necessarily and intimately bound to it, under the title of power.

Lawmaking is power making (original emphasis).¹¹⁹⁵

Here, Benjamin’s argument is that both sovereignty and revolutionary praxis employ a type of violence as means toward achieving what is to be established as law; yet, the thrust of Benjamin’s critique is that lawmaking violence as such is intimately bound to power. In the context of the anarchist notion of social revolution, Benjamin’s critique demonstrates how a form of power overthrown by revolutionary violence inevitably leads to another form of constituting power—that is, rather than eradicating the logic of the *archē*, *revolutionary praxis is fundamentally bound to the archē it opposes*. Yet, it is against the nexus that links sovereignty to revolution, that Benjamin attempt to rethink

¹¹⁹³ Walter Benjamin, “Critique of Violence,” in *Reflections: Essays, Aphorisms, Autobiographical Writings*, trans. Edmund Jephcott (New York: Schocken Books, 1978), 294.

¹¹⁹⁴ *Ibid*, 286.

¹¹⁹⁵ *Ibid*, 295.

the possibility of a radical political praxis that could never reproduce the dialectic between law-making violence and law-preserving violence. Indeed, in searching for another form of politics that neither turns upon the preservation or making of power, Benjamin's penultimate point is to gesture toward another form of politics that could never assume the form an *archē*. It is in the context of elaborating an anarchic political violence that Benjamin makes a further distinction between the "mythical violence" of constituting power and "divine violence," a specific type of "law-destroying" or non violent violence.¹¹⁹⁶ While revolutionary violence can indeed be law-destroying, the distinction Benjamin draws between revolutionary praxis and "divine violence" lies in the way that the latter refuses to reterritorialize as power. "For this reason," Benjamin writes, "the first of these undertakings (mythical violence) is law making but the second is anarchistic."¹¹⁹⁷ Indeed, it is in this distinction between the constituting power of mythical violence and the "law-destroying" non-power of "divine violence" that Agamben locates the possibility of an anarchic politics of destitution.

To be sure, much of Agamben's work is set to explore the possibilities of an "anarchistic" form of political praxis that refuses the traditional logic of a constituting power. Thus in "Notes on Politics" Agamben argues that the "concepts of *sovereignty* and of *constituent power*, which are at the core of our political tradition, have to be abandoned" (original emphasis).¹¹⁹⁸ If these two concepts are to be abandoned this because sovereignty and constituent power are representations of "the being-hidden of the historical *archē*."¹¹⁹⁹ In contrast to the attempts to affirm revolutionary political praxis, a form of praxis that reproduces the logic of the *archē* in the form of a constituting power, in a lecture given in 2013 Agamben invokes Benjamin's concept of "divine violence" in order to elaborate what he refers to as "destituent power," a unique form of praxis which, in its refusal to be reconstituted as revolutionary archic power designates an alternative paradigm for an anarchic politics of resistance. Indeed, it is the elaboration of the concept and praxis of "destituent power," and not that of revolution, that Agamben

¹¹⁹⁶ Ibid, 297.

¹¹⁹⁷ Ibid, 292.

¹¹⁹⁸ Giorgio Agamben, "Notes on Politics," in *Means Without End*, trans. Vincenzo Binetti and Cesare Casarino (Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 2000), 112,

¹¹⁹⁹ Ibid, 112.

assigns as key task for political theory. For Agamben, then: “if revolutions...correspond to constituent power, that is, a violence that establishes and constitutes the new law, in order to think a destituent power we have to imagine completely other strategies, whose definition is the task of the coming politics.”¹²⁰⁰

By “destituent power” Agamben means to suggest a form of political praxis—indeed of resistance—that deprives power of its archic foundation and, in doing so, deactivates the possibility of an *oikonomia*. The fundamental distinction Agamben draws between constituent and destituent power has been further affirmed by The Invisible Committee in their text *To Our Friends*. According to The Invisible Committee, “to institute or constitute power is to give it a basis, a foundation, a legitimacy;” in contrast, however, “to destitute power is to deprive it of its foundations,” which as The Invisible Committee concludes “is precisely what insurrections do.”¹²⁰¹ Indeed, it is because the traditional paradigm of revolution fundamentally turns upon constituting its own archic legitimacy, The Invisible Committee encourages us to “reconceive of revolution as *pure destitution* instead” (original emphasis).¹²⁰² As “pure destitution,” a form of politics which, in refusing to constitute itself as a form of power ruptures the logic of the *archē*, therefore appears not as a revolutionary struggle to overturn power, but instead as an “insurrectionary destitution” of power exercised as government.¹²⁰³ For The Invisible Committee, then, “destituting this epoch’s specific form of power requires, for a start, that one challenge the notion that men need to be governed, either democratically by themselves or hierarchically by others.”¹²⁰⁴ It is this notion of insurrectionary destitution that brings to light the fundamental relation Foucault posits between life and resistance in the concept of the art of not being governed.

In challenging the constituent logic that has guided the traditional logic of revolution, which is to say depriving radical politics of its archic foundation, Agamben and Tiqqun both reveal that what is at stake in the politics of resistance is not a revolutionary overthrow of power, but instead another form-of-life, a fundamental being-

¹²⁰⁰ Giorgio Agamben, “Elements for a Theory of Destituent Power,” 10.

¹²⁰¹ The Invisible Committee, *To Our Friends*, 74-75.

¹²⁰² Ibid, 74.

¹²⁰³ Ibid, 77.

¹²⁰⁴ Ibid, 77.

without government. Indeed, at stake in a theory of destitution is not a decisive confrontation with power, but rather as Tiqqun suggests “certain coincidence between living and struggling, a coincidence that is never given without simultaneously requiring its construction.”¹²⁰⁵ Rather than a revolutionary overthrow of power, it is this continuity between living and resistance—a certain condition of being-without-government—that best animates the history of anarchism. Indeed, it is this elemental point in which the aim of resistance is to create another form-of-life and way of living that Bookchin neglects to notice in his polemic against Foucault and “lifestyle anarchism.” For Agamben, then, “the destitution of power and its works is an arduous task, because it is first of all and only in a form-of-life that it can be carried out.” In this way, “only a form-of-life,” Agamben concludes, “is completely destituent.”¹²⁰⁶ To be sure, Agamben defines form-of-life in a manner that captures the ways in which another way of life is itself what is ultimately at stake in destituting power. A form-of-life, according to Agamben, is “a life that can never be separated from its form,” which is to say a life so closely tied to its form of living that it cannot be captured by power.¹²⁰⁷ Thus, while Bookchin expels the possibilities of a politics of resistance developed through one’s ethos of revolt, or way of living in resistance Agamben, like Foucault, suggests that it is only in life that one is able to resist or destitute power effectively. For Agamben, then, a “life that can never be separated from its form is a life for which, in its way of living, what is at stake is living itself, and, in its living, what is at stake above all else is its mode of living.”¹²⁰⁸ Here Agamben emphasizes that what is at stake in the term “form-of-life” refers to a specific chiasmic structure between life and its particular ethos; life is what is at stake in one’s mode of living; and yet at the same time, what is at stake in this form of living is the ethos, or way of living that gives life its form as such. Further emphasizing the vital relation between life and its particular ethos, Tiqqun writes “[m]y form of life does not relate to *what* I am, but to *how*, to the specific *way*, I am what I am.”¹²⁰⁹ Herein lies the key: insofar as an insurrectionary destitution of power can only take place within a form-

¹²⁰⁵ Tiqqun, *This is Not a Program*, trans. Joshua David Jordon (California: Semiotext(e), 2011). 69

¹²⁰⁶ Giorgio Agamben, “Elements for a Theory of Destituent Power,” 13.

¹²⁰⁷ Ibid, 15.

¹²⁰⁸ Ibid, 15.

¹²⁰⁹ Tiqqun, *Introduction to Civil War*, 23.

of-life as the basic unit of revolt, the question of radical politics must be rethought as an art of not being governed, rather than a revolutionary overturning of power. What is at stake in a theory of destituent power is the elaboration of a specific ethos of resistance, a specific nexus between one's mode of living and resistance. Indeed, a life so closely tied to its form of resistance, which is to say its specific way of living in the world through revolt, is what Agamben calls the "ungovernable."

Crucially, it is in this theory of destituent power that Agamben locates a real political possibility for rethinking possibility of an anarchist politics of resistance without collapsing into the constituent logic of revolutionary praxis. "It is this destituent potentiality," Agamben writes "that both the anarchist tradition and 20th century thought sought to define without ever actually succeeding."¹²¹⁰ If the anarchist tradition neglected to understand the potentiality of a destituent politics, this failure itself arises in the failure to rethink the possibility of a politics of resistance outside of the constituent power of revolution, a form of praxis that could never reproduce the archē it opposes. At the same time, however, it is within the intersection between Foucault's theory of resistance and the anarchist tradition that one can begin to glimpse the beginnings of this form of destituent politics in the art of not being governed. Destituent power is itself not a power, but a form of what Foucault would call "non-power." Yet as non-power, destituent power is a form of resistance which, in refusing to constitute itself as a form of power, ruptures the logic of the archē while opening up the possibility for life without government. This destituent politics as a form of resistance corresponds with a particular ethos, a form-of-life, in which what is at stake in resistance is becoming-ungovernable. It is in the context of a politics of destitution that the relation between Foucault and anarchism I have been elaborating throughout this project can be fully understood.

In shifting the site of politics away from its traditional location in power, government and sovereignty toward the sites of resistance, it is my contention that the question of resistance within the anarchist tradition can also be understood as a movement away from the field of power. Whereas the concept of revolution designates a form of constituent power similar to the ends and means of sovereignty, an anarchic politics of resistance necessitates a theory of destitution which, in withdrawing from

¹²¹⁰ Ibid, 13.

power, deprives it of its archic foundation in the movements toward the ungovernable. In this understanding, it is no longer necessary for anarchism to propose a universal logic of social revolution, nor a corresponding detailed prescription of how people ought to organize and live their lives after they are freed from oppression in the coming revolution. What is necessary, however, is a retheorization of the fundamental relation between the politics of resistance and an insurrectionary ethos of revolt, a certain continuity between movements of resistance and movements in life, in which what is at stake in resistance is itself a particular form-of-life, an ethos, or way of being in the world through resistance—that is, a politics conceived in terms of becoming-ungovernable. An anarchist politics of resistance as such finds its basis and is elaborated as an art of not being governed.

When the concepts of power and government are understood to emerge on condition of resistance, the political conceived as *archē* reveals its own contingency, and the question of politics is redirected from a constituent theory of an *oikonomia* to a destituent theory of anarchy. This condition of anarchy—of being-without-government—is neither pre-existent nor that which proceeds from a revolutionary overthrow of power, but that which emerges as resistance to governmentality. Politics as such is that which destitutes the power of an *oikonomia*, a movement of resistance that at once emerges with and prefigures the condition of anarchy. Yet, while Foucault teaches us that politics emerges as resistance to governmentality, he also reveals that the site of resistance is not always located at the site of power, but rather in a withdrawal from power. Although resistance often directly coincides with the sites of power, what is at stake in the movement of resistance against governmentality is not a fundamental contestation, or final war that might ultimately bring about an end to all power, but instead a transformation in life. Such a form of politics as resistance is less a new set of arrangements than the refusal to be arranged, a withdrawal from power in the affirmation of becoming-ungovernable. Resistance as a permanent process of becoming ungovernable is therefore not to be conceived as an end in itself, but as the means of transformation without end. An anarchist politics of resistance without end does not, however, foreclose the possibility of realizing anarchism because the condition of

anarchy animated in the politics of resistance generates the very potentiality of its own persistence in the art of not being governed.

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